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COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

July 16, 1999

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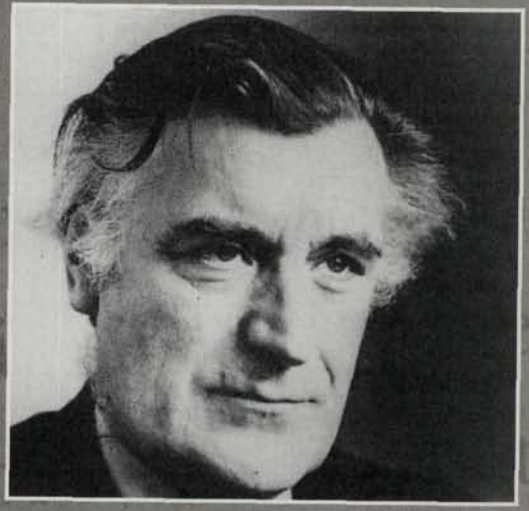

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To the Editors

It's coming!

A sure sign that the Apocalypse is upon us: a movie star on the cover of *Commonweal* [June 18].

KEN HULL
Oak Park, Mich.

The editors reply: That wasn't a movie star, it was a fairy queen.

An N, a Q, who cares?

Sorry, never having written to you before, to come now to point out the repeated typo on page 6 of the June 18 issue: "Iran" twice for Iraq, in the editorial comment "End game." Yes, Homer nods; but this time he banged his head on the desk.

MYLES WHALEN
New York, N.Y.

From the editors: Ow.

A model article

A quick note of appreciation for Ambassador Robert E. White's June 4 article on the U.S. legacy in Central America. It is a model of well-backed information and reasoned recommendation. Now, especially as national election time nears, this moral and economic drain on our national life cries out for the attention of citizens.

DONALD PURCELL
Potsdam, N.Y.

A matter of timing

Hooray for Ambassador Robert White's "Rethinking Foreign Policy" [June 4], calling for a Truth Commission on United States' actions in Central America. As he noted, what happened there is "not just about events that took place...[in] the cold war." The story goes on today.

White was in El Salvador in 1980 when the bodies of the murdered nuns and lay missionary were dug up from their shallow graves. He has been quoted as saying then, "They won't get away with it this time." But of course "they" did; the Salvadoran military went on to kill thousands more as the decade dragged on to a close. It is important to understand the U.S. role in prolonging the bloodshed. For example, why couldn't White's article have been written back then, when it could still have saved lives?

And what about the survivors of the Central American civil wars of the 1980s, often ignored by the U.S. media and public? The United States has treated Nicaraguan exiles generously, granting them legal status. It has treated Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees very differently, contesting their right to be here every step of the way; only recently has there been a slight improvement in their legal rights. They are the living witnesses of what we did in Central America. It is time to listen to what they have to tell us, instead of trying to deport them.

ANNE PILSBURY
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The writer is an attorney with Central American Legal Assistance.

Ready to kill

Your issue of June 4 is filled, as usual, with stimulating ideas and insights, but it was the cover that hit me hardest. These young soldiers are prepared to kill men, women, children without regard to innocence or guilt—and not for a cause or to protect homes or family but to maintain in power those who pay their wages. We constantly see in the news the faces of the victims of war but the troubled faces of young men who bring death to their own countrymen suggest that they are themselves victims of the weapons in their hands—reminders that violence is a self-consuming fire.

PHIL JOHNSON
Fountain Valley, Calif.

(Continued on page 4)

Catholic Intellectual Wanted

Commonweal is looking for a journalist/writer to join its staff as an associate editor. The individual should possess excellent writing and analytical skills and plenty of opinions (the more well-reasoned the better).

Responsibilities will include manuscript reading and editing, copy and proof editing, editorial and straight newswriting. Some previous newspaper or magazine experience is desirable as is knowledge about the range of issues—religious, political, literary, and cultural—that the magazine covers.

This is a rewarding but demanding job. Salary is modest, but the benefits are good, including a 4-day work week. Send résumé and writing samples to: Editor, *Commonweal*, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 405, New York, NY 10115 or e-mail: commonweal@msn.com

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COMMONWEAL

July 16, 1999 / Volume CXXVI, Number 13

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(Continued from page 2)

Managed care is wasteful

In "Money & Medical Care" [June 18], Christopher Koller writes re: single-payer programs: "European and Canadian systems have shown that universal coverage is not immune from the underlying cost pressures being felt in health care today." So what else is new? Tell that to the HMO managers. An ever-increasing number of them are in need of intensive care for the very same reason. The problem with managed care is that it is enormously wasteful. Just look at its duplication—multiple plans each with its gaggle of business school graduates who know not of medical care, full-page newspaper ads and TV blurbs that claim my HMO is better than yours, and on and on. The real question is what to do about the many millions of the uninsured. Clearly, managed care is unable to meet this need. Single-payer basic medical insurance is the way the rest of the developed countries of the world have chosen. It is about time that we do the same.

BENEDICT J. DUFFY, M.D.
Hingham, Mass.

Jobs alone not enough

It's true that "jobs work," as the headline over E.J. Dionne, Jr.'s June 18 column suggests. Lower unemployment figures and a declining crime rate are surely elements that give comfort. But a focus only on these figures ignores the millions who still live in poverty, the minimal wage levels of many new jobs, their temporary status, and the frequent absence of health benefits. Just as welfare reform has reduced the number of recipients but left those in need no better or worse off than before, the employment and crime statistics will represent a historic achievement only when every job brings a living wage and when the need of health insurance is met, especially for the millions of children without it.

MARK FRANCESCHINI, O.M.I.
Denver, Colo.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated August 13.

A sign of renewal

As rector of Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, I feel impelled to respond to your editorial [April 23] about the *New York Times Magazine* article on our seminarians and to the more recent critical letters [May 21].

Our seminary serves over thirty dioceses from across the United States and enjoys the full support of our chancellor, Cardinal William Keeler, and other bishops from across the nation, who visit here regularly and are familiar with our program.

The statements characterizing the Mount as "a departure from our enduring practice of open dialogue in discerning our unfolding tradition" [letter, May 21] and suggesting that we are "preparing priests to serve a church in full retreat from the modern world" [editorial] are simply unfair and uninformed judgments. The *Times* article depicts our seminarians as "The Last Counterculture," a perspective of the author. In truth, our future priests are being formed for the task of the "evangelization of culture," deeply imbued through their education here with the vision and teaching of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's many writings on the theme, most recently his apostolic exhortation after the Synod for America, *Ecclesia in America*.

Our allegedly disengaged seminarians serve the poor in the inner cities of Washington, Baltimore, and Harrisburg, minister to the marginalized in local prisons, care for victims of AIDS in a D.C. hospice, work in shelters for the homeless, and spend summers in Latin America learning Spanish for ministry to immigrants in their home dioceses. They run a youth evangelization weekend retreat that attracts over 2,000 teen-agers every year who leave here excited and motivated to practice their faith more fully.

Yes, I admit, our seminarians are zealous for the faith (but they are not zealots). Yes, I admit they are passionately committed to the teachings of the church (not just in the area of sexual morality, but in the area of social justice as well). Yes, I admit, they are deeply devoted to the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary (and genuinely desire to be "men of God," dedicated to a disciplined daily life of prayer). Yes, I admit, they reject aspects of our American culture that are contrary to the values of the gospel (and, in this sense, are countercultural). Yes, I admit, they intend to wear clerical attire as a public witness to their faith and sign of their vocation. (Clericalism? Not by my definition, which is arrogance and disregard for the dignity of the laity, attitudes not tolerated in our seminary.)

Should we not rejoice in these qualities, so evident in this new generation of seminarians? I do not pretend to depict our seminarians as perfect, but I have a hard time understanding the harsh criticism of our men still in formation, desirous of following the call of the Lord, preparing to serve the church. Why this unfounded suspicion of clericalism and fear of a return to the 1950s?

No, Mount Saint Mary's Seminary and seminarians are not a return to the 1950s. They are a sign of renewal in the church, inspired by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

(Continued on page 28)

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Post bellum

Although war is a great evil, it does have a great virtue: it can resolve political conflicts and lead to peace." There are not many full-fledged warmongers left in the United States and it is bracing to follow Edward Luttwak's claims for the clarifying and settling effects of full-throttle warfare. "Give War a Chance" is the perverse headline the editors of *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1999) have given his article, and that is the perverse argument Luttwak makes in lamenting the West's current propensity to intervene in local wars before the belligerents exhaust themselves or one side emerges victorious.

By turns outrageous and fascinating, this line of thinking is also instructive. *Commonweal* supported the NATO intervention in Kosovo. And as difficult as peacemaking may prove to be now that American and European troops are on the ground, we still believe that the United States and its European allies chose the right course. For there were alternatives in Kosovo, and Luttwak's position is one of them: "Give war a chance." In this view, the West should have allowed the Serb forces—the Yugoslav army, the paramilitaries, and the police—and the Albanians—civilians and the KLA—to fight to the death. It doesn't take much to imagine what would have happened. Bosnia all over again.

Even Bill Clinton, who temporized over the Balkans in his first term, now recognizes his mistake. At a June 26 press conference, the president asked rhetorically, "Why did President Clinton do this [in Kosovo], why did Tony Blair do this, why did Jacques Chirac go along, why did the Germans get in there with both feet so early, given their history?" Answering his own question, he admitted: "You have to see this through the lens of Bosnia."

There was another apparent alternative in Kosovo to Luttwak's "give war a chance." It was "give peace a chance," that is, don't use force or the threat of force. But was there any real difference between them? "Peace" and war alike would have produced in Kosovo death, rape, torture, and destruction beyond anything seen in Bosnia. It is against that spectacle that the deaths and destruction caused by NATO bombing in Yugoslavia and Kosovo must be measured.

The strategy of bombing *only*, and only from 15,000 feet, will be long contested. Could a ground war have been justified? In retrospect it may appear to have been the essential ingredient for an incontestable and final Serbian defeat, but at a terrible cost in lives. Should the West have done nothing? Again, at a terrible cost in lives on both sides. The course NATO chose hardly seems out of proportion to the death and destruction that the Serbs would have caused had they been given a totally free hand in Kosovo by our inaction. If just-war theorists finally find NATO wanting in some particulars, their analysis, nonetheless, must account for the consequences if we had done nothing. That hardly seems to have been a "just" option.

Nor are we done with the matter. The first weeks of "peacekeeping" in Kosovo do not promise an easy resumption of "normal" life. The return of refugees to homes, schools, farms, factories, and businesses that have been destroyed will be a continuing source of anger, discouragement, and despair. Nor will the work of NATO troops be short-term, not as long as the desire for revenge animates Albanians and Serbs alike. Insofar as it is the United Nations that takes charge of the civil

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government in Kosovo, we should expect a degree of temporizing with all factions—the KLA, Albanian political forces, the Serbs, and Belgrade—that will make the return of civil society more difficult and more tenuous. But for all of that, there is reason to hope: The bombing has stopped, the refugees are on their way home, and European governments are ready to provide reconstruction funds. Repairing a wounded society can begin.

The dark cloud on the horizon is Yugoslavia—Slobodan Milosevic, intact military and paramilitary forces, and a civil society united by a history that revels in defeat and the preachments of radical nationalists. The dark conclusion seems to be, the greater the defeat the greater the Serbian people and the greater their justification for revenge. Who would now be surprised to see Belgrade turn on the Montenegrins, who refused to support the war in Kosovo: or on the Hungarians long settled in northern Serbia; or, given enough time, on the Albanian Kosovars, once again.

Early in the bombing campaign, many arguments were advanced for a NATO ground invasion of Serbia. One of the most provocative was the proposal that an invasion and occupation be followed by a program in which NATO would do "in Serbia what the Allies did in Germany and Japan after World War II," namely, "make the effort necessary to cure a national psychosis" (Blaine Harden, *New York Times Week in Review*, May 9, 1999). This proposal was further developed by Daniel Goldhagen, who argued in the *New Republic*, "As with Germany and Japan, the defeat and occupation of Serbia—and the reshaping of its political institutions and prevailing mentality, are morally and, in the long run, practically necessary" (May 17, 1999). There having been no ground war and no NATO occupation of Yugoslavia, the "reeducation" of Serbia has been unfortunately postponed.

As Milosevic continues his round of "victory" appearances to be followed, at minimum, by serious economic troubles, NATO and the UN must stick to a firm policy of containment. For if the Serbian "national psychosis" is a diagnosis that no one in the West wants to contend with, we must at least recognize that a nation that has started four wars in ten years and lost all of them is not in touch with reality.

Saint Francis de Sales Award

Congratulations to Senior Writer **Robert G. Hoyt** on being awarded the Catholic Press Association's **Saint Francis de Sales Award**. Bob was first nominated for the award thirty-eight years ago as founding editor of the *National Catholic Reporter*. Time, justice, and a clear sense of gratitude for Bob's remarkable contributions have finally prevailed. Bob Hoyt rightfully joins the company of previous honorees John Cogley, Jim Shannon, John Courtney Murray, George Higgins, and Edward S. Skillin.

75 COMMONWEAL

1999 marks Commonweal's 75th year of publication. We invite you, dear readers, without whom this milestone would never have been reached, to celebrate with us. Here is some of what we are planning—

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A COMMONWEAL FORUM

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RESPONDENTS (LIST IN FORMATION): John Noonan, John McGreevy, E.J. Dionne, Jr. & others

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DANIEL CALLAHAN

WHAT'S NATURAL?

It's hard to say

One of my favorite examples of contemporary moral confusion, too little noted, is the status of nature as a moral guide. A common response to the announcement of the cloned sheep Dolly, opening the prospect of cloned human beings, was repugnance and recoil. It is a prospect that many speak of as "unnatural," and for that reason alone to be banned.

But the history of what has been called unnatural and repugnant in medicine has been erratic. The initially hostile reaction to anesthesia in the mid-nineteenth century is one instance. More recently, while underground work on *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) was going on in the late 1960s and the 1970s, the above-ground discussion was filled with similar talk about the unnatural; that was the main reason the researchers, fearing a public backlash, worked hard to stay out of sight. But when Baby Louise Brown was born in 1978, and the technique was quickly picked up to be used as a routine way of treating the infertile, repugnance turned to elation, the thrill of scientific progress quickly trumping any lingering repugnance. Something like that may already be happening with the idea of human cloning: The widespread call for a ban has not yet been heeded and there seems to be a sharply declining congressional momentum to go that way.

In Europe, by contrast, bans against research on human cloning were quickly put in place in a number of countries. That same Europe has lately seen a furious debate about the use of genetically modified food products (now known as GM), with strong opposition in many countries, Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom in particular. The repugnance so vivid there is, however, not matched in the United States, where there has hardly been any widespread opposition to GM. American advertisers can't resist advertising products as "natural," yet the United States would be at the top of the list of countries willing to put aside moral claims based on what is considered unnatural.

The entire history of modern medicine, it has plausibly been argued, has been a war against nature, that nature which sickens, cripples, and kills us. Yet of late there has been a powerful movement toward alternative medicine, and particularly the notion of holistic health based on a supposedly richer understanding of nature; and a no less strong emphasis, in conventional medicine, on the development of good health habits, based on the ancient Greek notion of *hygeia*, that a proper heeding of the needs of the body will allow the body to take care of itself with minimal medical intervention.

The environmental movement has of course been another important arena for trying to determine how humans should best adapt to nature. If there is any single principle compelling that movement, it is the necessity for humans to learn how to live with, and to respect, the natural world—a world said to offer guides to sensible living if only they will be heeded.

The great debate among environmentalists has been between the preservationists, following John Muir, who have held that nature has intrinsic value and should be preserved for its own sake; and the conservationists, for whom Gifford Pinchot was the model, and who have held that nature should be protected—but also carefully managed—to serve human needs. Heavy-handed technologists, and much of industry, have taken the conservationist position and usually pushed it further than Pinchot: Nature is malleable and resilient and what technology harms more technology can cure.

That environmentalist position is not far from a stance one can readily discover in medicine and biotechnology: There is no reason that biomedicine should not try to enhance and improve human nature, and no reason to see nature as offering any intrinsic reasons not to be manipulated. Prudence is needed—nature can bite back—but that's about all the caution necessary. For enthusiasts of genetic engineering, neither cloning, nor the improvement of human intelligence, nor giving parents the power to select the genetic characteristics of their children, nor developing more profitable agricultural products, is an occasion for repugnance. The more suitable emotion is excitement, the thrill of discovery, and the heady prospect of greater choice over our genetic destiny,

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a destiny in our hands to remake as we see fit.

It was the philosopher David Hume who first argued that an "ought" cannot be derived from an "is," and that view has remained almost axiomatic right up to the present. I have never been quite convinced about that. Since "is" is all there is, in this or any other world, where else can "oughts" be found? In any case, the axiom is constantly turned on its head by enthusiasts of genetic engineering: Since it *is* possible to change nature, which limits our choices and makes us sick, then it *ought* to be done.

Just as my friend Leon R. Kass at the University of Chicago found practically no support—and mainly derision—when he tried to use repugnance as the take-off point for an argument against human cloning, I have had similar trouble when I have tried to use the "natural" as a point of departure for my moral arguments. One of them is this: If it is "natural" for people to age and die, then there should be no compulsion on the part of public policy to provide endless life-saving technologies for the old. Now that was a really repugnant idea for many, who responded by charging ageism and pressing the individuality of the elderly. Another is that, since death is natural, there should be a limit on money spent, say, to extend the human life span. Why not, respond the technological enthusiasts? Who cares what is "natural"? That is a response congenial to liberal individualism, on the left, and to the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, on the right. Nature does not stand a chance against the twin gods of progress and prosperity.

I had planned to end this column by talking about the present state of natural law theory. It is just as well that I have no more space. It is hard to think of a moral theory that has come upon harder times, having only a minute following these days. And what's left of it seems so split by internal squabbles that it is hard to know where it stands in any case. But then I suppose there is nothing more natural than debates about the foundations of morality or the nature of "nature." □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

SUMMERS PAST

Listening to the corn grow

As we head into high summer I find myself thinking often of summers long ago and a way of life long gone. When I was a child we four—my brother, two sisters, and I—spent part of each summer on a farm. There are few farms like it anymore in this day of huge acreage, single crops, and big machines. Farms today are as much factories as farms and require such huge investments of money to equip and run them that fewer and fewer young people can start out on their own. The farm population has dropped drastically and the small towns dependent on farmers are fast disappearing.

The farm I remember was relatively small—one hundred and sixty acres. The crops were mixed—wheat, oats and corn—and there were varied livestock—a small herd of cows, some pigs and, of course, flocks of chickens and turkeys. It was not a very prosperous farm but it sustained a family and was a haven of hospitality for a widespread group of our uncles, aunts, and first and second cousins. It was always called Aunt Molly's, never Uncle Dan's. Our Aunt Molly was the matriarch of the clan. Short, round, smiling and imperturbable, she was its heart and center.

The farm was worked by Uncle Dan and our cousin Martin. His sisters, Catherine, Nellie, and Teresa, were teachers home for the summer. They were kept busy with the constant baking, cooking, gardening, and canning that filled the summer days. We could help or not as we chose so we found joining in the activities as enjoyable as play.

We found the creature life on the farm endlessly interesting. In the yard near the back door, hens—speckled black and white or Rhode Island Reds—scratched for food, each surrounded by her chicks. They were not penned but roamed the yard and seldom strayed far. At the approach of anyone or anything deemed dangerous, they spread their wings, gathering the chicks under them for shelter. We were allowed to make pets of the downy yellow chicks if we could, but we had little success and lost interest as they grew larger and began to sprout feathers. The turkey gobbler bestrode that yard and occasionally went into attack mode with his tail features erect in a fan, gobbling furiously, and posing a delicious threat as we ran past. His flock of white turkey hens forsook the yard early to forage for food along the lane and in the or-

"Hi! We've finally come home to roost."

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chard across the road. Each evening before the dew fell we went with one of our cousins to herd them in before they could roost in the trees as they were apt to do. Eventually the chicken hens or, less often, the turkeys, became Sunday dinner. Their heads were lopped off on a block near the woodpile by Martin as we watched the gory sight with horrified interest and no guilt.

Sometimes we watched the cows as they came one by one to drink at the water tank by the windmill after evening milking. We looked on from a distance because of Aunt Molly's fear that what she always called "the animal" might be with them. But when the bull was safe in pasture, Martin would take us to see the newborn calves or the latest litter of pigs. The latter were beguiling, white and clean and cuddly looking at first. We thought it a shame when they were led away from their bed of straw into the mud of the pen by their big shambling mother, but they took to it enthusiastically.

We soon fell into the rhythm of the days and weeks on the farm. We woke to the sound of the cream separator. Uncle Dan and Martin had already finished the morning milking and, as the noise of the separator died down, we could hear the tinkle of the bells as the cows returned to pasture. When we came down to breakfast we could see in the room off the kitchen the tall cans of milk and cream cooling and ready to be taken to the creamery.

After breakfast the day was well on its way. First came the gathering of eggs from the chicken house where laying hens scattered with a clatter of wings as we came in. Sometimes a late-laying hen greeted us with triumphant cackling. Others with an urge to "setting" had to be shooed away. Most of the eggs we picked from the nests were still warm. Then it was off to the garden where, depending on the part of the summer it was, there were low-lying strawberries to pick, raspberries, blackberries, and prickly gooseberries to strip from the bushes, and rhubarb to cut before it became woody. There was leaf lettuce to gather, carrots to pull, potatoes to dig, pea pods and string beans to pick. It was a constant harvest.

By midmorning it was time to take morning lunch to the men in the fields. We walked with one or another of our cousins through the stubble or the corn rows to wherever the men had found a resting place at the edge of a field for themselves and the horses, and waited while they ate the sandwiches and drank lemonade thirstily, fanning themselves with their big straw hats.

Then it was back to the house where preparations for midday dinner were in progress. Perhaps Aunt Molly had baked rolls. One cousin was shelling peas, another peeling potatoes. By the time the men came in and were washing up at the pump at the kitchen sink, the table was set in the big cool dining room. Platters of pork chops or roast beef and dishes of potatoes and vegetables were on the table. Perhaps a pie was cooling in the kitchen. In retrospect it seems like a lot of food but it took a good deal to fuel the energy required for the work of the farm.

Amazingly enough, once dinner was cleared there was time for pleasure. Some days we went visiting—to neighbors on the next farm or to cousins on farms not far away. We children played hide-and-seek or softball with the children there while our elders sat and chatted.

On very hot days we were taken by horse and buggy to splash in the shallow pools of a creek not far away. Then it was home to cold supper in the kitchen and the evening spent reading or playing checkers by the warm yellow light of the big kerosene lamp. The routine was varied by the Saturday-night trip to the nearest town where our cousins picked up the few staples needed. We enjoyed working our way up Main Street with them and meeting with other farm families and catching up with their news. Finally for us children there was the treat of ice cream cones and the rare ride home in the dark. Sunday Mass the next day was followed by a special dinner and a quiet, lazy afternoon.

It was a simple life filled with small satisfactions and discoveries. We had time to notice the meadowlarks starting up from the meadows and the black-eyed Susans beside the road. We learned what was inside a milkweed pod and how wheat newly cut by the binder was shocked. I remember evening walks and being aware of the scent of new-mown hay in one field and the heavy fragrance of pollinating corn in another. On hot July evenings it almost seemed that we could hear the corn grow. I am glad I have all that to remember. □

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Andrew M. Greeley

J.F. POWERS R.I.P.

Catholic storyteller

On a Sunday afternoon in the mid 1960s, I turned on the Chicago fine-arts station in my car radio and heard a gently amused voice discussing J. F. Powers's novel *Morte D'Urban*. It was soon obvious that the voice belonged to the author. He seemed a man very like the stories he wrote—wry, sad, funny, wistful, and hopeful. He told us how he missed Urban now that the story was finally written. I hung on every word. I had read each of Powers's stories as soon as they appeared and was delighted that both the man and his words seemed to confirm what I felt about the stories. Here was indeed a Catholic storyteller in an era when the wise Catholic critics of both the right and the left were saying that there could be no such thing.

That interview flashed through my imagination when I heard of Powers's death on June 12. He was the last of the great trinity of mid-century (Irish) Catholic storytellers that broke through the barriers of the American literary world in those years, Edwin O'Connor, with his prize-winning novels, and Flannery O'Connor, with her highly acclaimed short stories, being the other two. Their success came just at the time that self-critics within the Catholic community were lamenting the lack of (Irish) Catholic cultural achievements. Now hardly anyone would claim that all three writers were not uniquely Catholic, storytellers in the tradition of what David Tracy has dubbed the analogical imagination, an imagination which as Powers hinted in the title of one of his collections, is aware of "the presence of grace."

Powers is a Catholic storyteller not merely because he wrote about priests or about midwestern Catholicism but because he was acutely aware of the presence of grace and cared deeply about the salvation of his characters (as do his colleague at Saint John's University Jon Hassler and the English novelist David Lodge). Even his character Urban, shallow ecclesiastical operator that he is, cannot escape the transforming touch of grace.

Some of Powers's early stories were about a city very much like Chicago (and a parish very much like Our Lady of Lourdes on Ashland Avenue), but his milieu eventually became that of the upper tier of states, the Catholicism of Saint John's Abbey, of the "Clementine" fathers, of Eugene McCarthy and Colman Barry and Godfrey Diekmann, of the dioceses (as he called them) of Duesterhaus and Ostrogothenberg, of the Strafe brothers and their paper *The Drover*.

He was a legend among the Johnies (as the students at Collegeville are called). He worked in a room over Benét Hall with a large glass window, out of which he stared at the campus, on some days from dawn to dusk, searching for just the right word. Sometimes, it was said, he needed a whole week to write a single sentence. My nephew Dan Durkin took a one-on-one course on short-story writing from Powers, and on hearing of his death wrote: "I have no doubt his spirit still shuffles, pauses, leans in the dusty attic tower of Benét Hall. I have no doubt if you want to listen, in the quiet, you'll still hear the soft slow click of his IBM Selectric."

One might lament that Powers's *oeuvre* is so small, only five slender volumes. Yet we must permit storytellers to work at their own pace, and rejoice that we have those five volumes which so brilliantly record the presence of grace in the Catholicism of the middle of the century.

How, it was often asked, did Powers know so much about priests? He must have lived in a rectory, it was suggested. Or perhaps priests who were his friends told him tales out of school. My guess is that his priests were creatures of a vivid, sympathetic, and unerring imagination, and that Powers worked with bits and pieces of clerical everyday life that he would pick up, as it were, on the fly. Moreover, around Saint John's there were plenty of pieces to pick up. Powers had us down cold and was perhaps too kind to us. However, he wanted us, like Urban, to be touched by grace.

Some say that Powers lost touch with the clergy of the years after Vatican II. I disagree. His final stories captured perfectly the effort of men trying to convince themselves that nothing had really changed when in fact everything had changed.

We will miss him. We will never again pick up a *New Yorker*, hoping against hope to find one of his stories. He was a Catholic to his fingertips, gentle and kind, whimsical and melancholy, and tough enough to do time in Sandstone Prison as a conscientious objector during World War II. He has now achieved the salvation he wanted for all his characters: He is in the presence of Grace. □

The Reverend Andrew M. Greeley *is a novelist from Chicago.*

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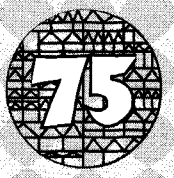

Throughout 1999, Commonweal *will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. Here from the August 5, 1949 issue is "Short and Select" by the late J.F. Powers.*

I suppose a writer going to church has more than an average interest in the sermon. In America it is a somewhat Protestant interest, perhaps. Certainly it can be a source of much woe. I myself have suffered all my adult life from something I can only describe as My Sunday Sickness. This is what comes from listening intently during the sermon. Sleepers and the indifferent Awake are never afflicted, and that they are dead or indifferent to the preacher is no test of their faith: It could be a testament to their wisdom, but very likely they are there, as they should be, for the Mass, and in that circumstance is one of the differences between Catholic and Protestant, and also the reason our sermons on the whole are no better than they need to be.

And still there must exist many misapprehensions about the sermon in high places. Regularly we of the congregation are exposed to a series of sermons dealing with the sacraments, say, in which they are served up cold, defined, with little or no interpretation, as though definitions were elements in physics and if you got the right ones in you'd get the right result, that is, the truth comprehended....Our Lord, however, did not teach by abstractions. He knew that something different—I would say more—was necessary.

Great sermons require great congregations; at least they do to go over....The conclusion often drawn from this proposition only seems to be true, that is, mediocre congregations require mediocre sermons, although this might explain why so many whose talents must certainly lie elsewhere see it their duty to become preachers, as if fulfilling a law of supply and demand. Who hasn't suffered the pedant trying to be a regular fellow? And the regular fellow—with a real feeling for baseball, say—trying to be dark and tragic?

But the worst is that so many excellent men talk down to congregations all their life, always with the hope of reaching great numbers at a level that language, theirs at least, just won't reach without perverting its purpose—assuming that souls are to be found there actually; there is no evidence that they are, from the sermons of Jesus. J.F. POWERS

Susanne Washburn

CLEARING THE MINES

Lethal excavations in Vietnam

The campaign against land mines, the work of many activists and diplomats, led to the 1997 Ottawa Treaty in which nations around the world—now numbering 135—agreed to ban the use, sale, and export of antipersonnel land mines. For signatories, the treaty took effect March 1, 1999. The United States remains an outsider. At Ottawa, it had unsuccessfully sought exemptions to the ban for a few hot spots like Korea, where 30,000 members of the American military are stationed. Without defensive land mines, the Pentagon maintains, such troops would be at unacceptable risk.

Apart from ending the new deployment of land mines, the removal of mines and other munitions already in place is universally acknowledged to be the most urgent task associated with this worldwide scourge. Each year exploding land mines cause the death or mutilation of more than 25,000 victims, primarily in underdeveloped countries, among which Vietnam and Cambodia rank as the most treacherous.

One small organization, based in Bainbridge Island, Washington, was the first to spearhead a response to the pressing need in Vietnam. Created as soon as the United States reestablished diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995, PeaceTrees Vietnam (PTVN) has a three-pronged program to deal with the leftover weapons that dot Quang Tri, the northernmost province of the former South Vietnam. The province includes a broad swath of land that was the DMZ (demilitarized zone) of the Vietnam War. Today Quang Tri harbors an estimated 58,000 land mines, although it is not even half the size of New Hampshire. Recently two other demining organizations—one German, one British—have joined PTVN in Vietnam. All three will concentrate on Quang Tri Province.

PTVN has so far sponsored ten trips to Vietnam. Early on, volunteer American experts trained Vietnamese deminers in the use of state-of-the-art equipment and UN safety regulations. The initial PTVN project cleared an eighteen-acre site; subsequently, PTVN volunteers—Americans, Vietnamese, and other nationals—planted 1,700 saplings there,

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made up of thirty-seven varieties of indigenous trees—eucalyptus, cinnamon, mango, and jackfruit among them. Those efforts were a step toward restoration of the once-diverse biological environment of the DMZ. The site, christened the Friendship Forest Park, now draws families for carefree recreation and school groups for overnight camping.

Prior to the deforestation of the DMZ, trees had provided a buffer against the ravages of perennial monsoons. Shorn of its sylvan screen, the region turned into a pressurized corridor, blasted by hot winds and subject to disastrous, even lethal, flooding. With each floodtide, long-buried mines—which can float—were unearthed and swept along to new, even distant, locations. Ghastly as the idea is, such weapons in various shapes—most no bigger than an adult fist, some sprouting stubby projections, others dotted with a pattern of holes—can seem attractive playthings to unsuspecting children. Because those who clear mines know that theirs is a job that will never be wholly finished, the need for comprehensive mine education is equally urgent.

The Danaan Parry Landmines Education Center addresses that problem. Located in the Friendship Forest Park and dedicated last September, the center is named for the late founder of Earthstewards Network, the umbrella group that includes PTVN. The 800-square-foot center, built in the style of local architecture, houses two classrooms and exhibit space designed for instruction on the appearance of landmines, the possibilities for their emergence, and how to behave in their presence.

Most important, in a society where not all families can afford to send their children to school, the center is creating a team of mobile professionals to instruct 25,000 trainers from the Vietnam Women's Union, a national organization with a membership of 8 million. Reaching into even the smallest hamlets, the trainers will disseminate the center's lifesaving information. Financed by a U.S. State Department grant, PTVN with staff members from James Madison University's Mine Action Information Center in Virginia are currently at work with representatives of the Quang Tri Women's Union on a nine-month project in Vietnam to develop the center's mines awareness curriculum.

PTVN founder Danaan Parry died suddenly at fifty-seven just before the organization's first large-team trip to Vietnam in 1996. Parry, a nuclear physicist, had opted for a change of life around 1980 and created the Holy Earth Foundation. From that evolved Earthstewards Network which fosters conflict resolution together with individual projects of community development around the world. Last month, twenty PTVN volunteers from the Seattle area, including fourteen high school students spent two weeks in Quang Tri, where they joined Vietnamese peers in work projects at a local school for homeless children.

PTVN prides itself on taking direction from the people it serves. Areas slated for mine reclamation are those the hosts have prioritized as the most dangerous. Early this year, PTVN Director Martha Hathaway was in Quang Tri with two explosive ordnance disposal specialists there for work on exactly that kind of site—ten acres adjacent to the Friendship Forest Park. At a spot on that land last September, two young boys were injured by an unexploded bomb just when the Danaan Parry center was dedicated. Prior to the monsoon season next November, another PTVN team of volunteers (each of whom pays $2,500 in travel costs) will join the Vietnamese to plant trees in the new extension to the park.

The goal of PeaceTrees Vietnam—to ensure a safe environment for the people of Quang Tri Province—is, by no means, a short-term objective. "The job will probably last my lifetime," observes thirty-year-old Hathaway. While the United States holds itself aloof from the Ottawa pact, the nongovernmental PTVN can already claim measurable success—mine by mine, tree by tree. □

IN KOSOVO, IN VIETNAM

A number of land mine explosions have been reported recently out of Kosovo. In one case five members of a family of seven perished as they all traveled in a car which was blown up within clear view of the Macedonian border and safety. Those deaths resulted from an anti-tank mine, designed to intercept heavy military equipment, here set off by a lighter vehicle. This type of mine is not banned under the Ottawa Treaty.

By contrast, in clearing its most recent 10-acre site in Quang Tri province, PTVN recovered two anti-personnel mines along with 40 other pieces of dangerous ordnance, among them the treacherous bomblets. Single components of a cluster device which scatters them over a wide area, each bomblet is individually timed so that the lethal threat extends over a longer term. Bomblets are among the intriguing-looking objects Vietnamese children may take for toys.

S.W.

Susanne Washburn, *long a* Time *magazine reporter, is* Commonweal*'s copy editor.*

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A POET'S UNMISTAKABLE VOICE

Remembering Ted Hughes

Paul Elie

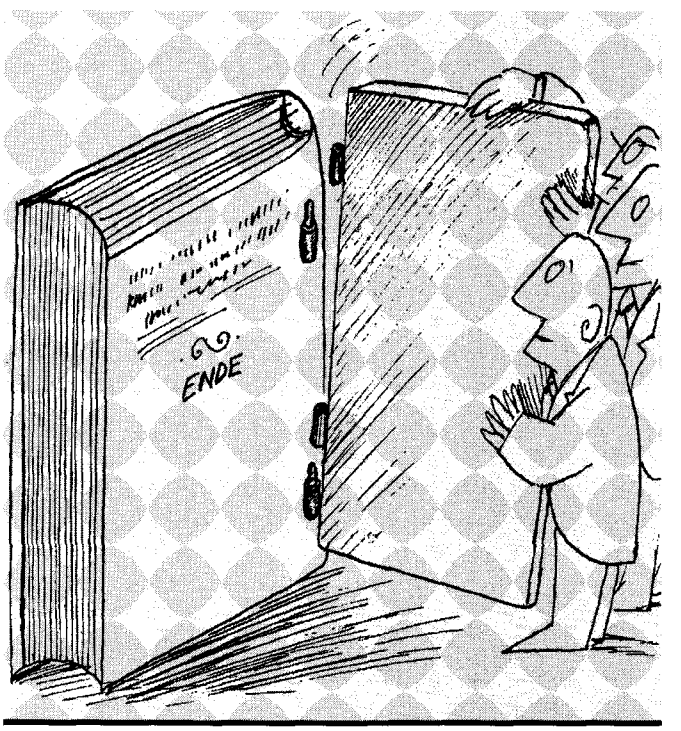
When I got to the church, on foot, slurping the last of a cappuccino from a Styrofoam cup, half a dozen of those big black hearse-like English taxis had formed a kind of procession in the roundabout out front, and some of the other guests were climbing out: middle-aged people leaning on their umbrellas like canes, the men and the women alike dressed in dark suits, because this was a memorial service, yes, but also because it was another rainy day in London. We proffered tickets in sherbety colors and were shown in through the open doors. Because I had a blue ticket, a docent in a long gown told me to walk all the way up the nave, and so I did, past the rood screen, past the pipe organ, past the plaques put up to honor priests and generals and other first-class English dead, until I reached the north transept, where I claimed a seat on the aisle and craned my neck. I had seen Westminster Abbey before, but from behind a camera as a tourist: It was smaller than I had pictured it, and more delicate, as though built from blocks of shortbread that had improbably withstood eight hundred years of Catholicism, Protestantism, imperialism, liberalism, secularism, tourism—what next?

Past the altar was Poet's Corner, where, someday soon, a plaque would be dedicated to the poet I had come from New York on the red-eye to remember, though he and I had never met. Today, however, the entire cathedral was dedicated to him. The place was packed. Once Prince Charles and the Queen Mum had taken their seats "God Save the Queen" was sung, and a man in surplice and cassock rose at the lectern to say that because Ted Hughes had been an unusual poet, this would be an unusual service.

When he died last October, Ted Hughes was eulogized as one of the only truly great English writers of his time: poet, translator, interpreter of Shakespeare, author of beloved children's books, handsome husband of the tormented genius Sylvia Plath, and poet laureate to the queen (which is why he was being celebrated at Westminster Abbey that day). I work as an editor with his American publisher, and I had worked with Hughes on his last few books: a volume of astonishing versions of tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translations of plays by Aeschylus, Euripides, and Racine, and *Birthday Letters*, a book of poems written in the form of letters to Plath, who killed herself in 1963. Hughes and I—I never called him Ted—exchanged letters and spoke on the phone every month or so, always about poetry or his books. It was amusing to see him and his wife, Carol, who were said to live in an ancient farmhouse in Devonshire, gradually master the use of a computer and a fax machine; I am proud to have helped nudge him in the direction of the Ovid book, which I think is going to last, and I especially like a letter he wrote to me describing what he was trying to do in his translation of Racine's *Phèdre*: To create "a dialogue like a face-to-face duel with flame throwers."

When he died, I still had a message from him on my answering machine tape, his deep orator's voice thanking me for sending him a book on Shakespeare that he must have known he would never get to read. It was a working relationship, only that, two people on the telephone talking about words on a page, and yet, in the scheme of things, it was one that meant a lot to me.

Maybe it was because I hardly knew him that I looked to the memorial service to reveal his character. It would not be right to say that I was disappointed, for it was a beautiful and moving service. The Tallis Scholars sang music from



Paul Elie, *editor of* A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints, *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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the English Renaissance, and we all sang Blake's "Jerusalem," faltering in the hard parts; Alfred Brendel played an adagio from a Beethoven sonata; some friends read poems and made remarks, and Seamus Heaney, in a kind of keynote, spoke movingly of his great friend, putting him in the English tradition of King Arthur and Beowulf and recalling the funeral in Devon—the dead poet's coffin, in the hands of family and friends, borne toward its final resting place at knee-height "as though on a current of light and air."

That image, it happened, echoed an image in the scriptural text, from Revelation, that had been read at the other end of the service an hour earlier, and that Her Majesty's Stationery Office had printed in big dark type in the program. It read: "Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

The passage is the natural ending of the book of Revelation (the rest is a kind of epilogue), and so the natural ending of the Scriptures; it goes on to describe the attributes of the servants of God—they shall see his face, his name shall be on their foreheads, etc.—and the life promised to them: "And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

I learned all that a few days later when I checked my Jerusalem Bible back in New York. That morning in Westminster Abbey, as Seamus Heaney returned to his seat and I sat fidgeting in mine, I thought to myself that something was missing here, and not just the spirit of the dead. It was the expectation that such a service should reflect the dead at all. Had I brought that with me from America? Or was it a Catholic expectation, the impulse to measure the distance between the liturgy and the life actually lived? I wondered if Ted Hughes, who had had cancer for a couple of years before he died, had taken a part in planning the service. It was beautiful, yes, and moving, and yet the service—not just the cathedral or the pomp and circumstance but the whole enterprise of Christian memorial—seemed to me to stand between us and the man we had come to remember. Ted Hughes, as I understood him through his books, was no vague or vestigial Christian, someone who had believed in some fashion once upon a time and still bore the mark of the Lamb on his forehead; no, as far as I knew he was his own kind of pagan—and I use the old, charged word because it seems to me to convey his vital relationship to the works of nature and those of classical antiquity, which, along with Shakespeare, were the deepest sources for his poetry. In Hughes's work, the mythological is the real: the doomed heroines in his versions of *Phèdre* and *Alcestis* seem to come straight out of his own life (his second wife killed herself as well), and the mythological superstructure of *Birthday Letters*, in which Plath's father looms spectrally as a god of the dead calling his daughter to join him there, is arguably the most personal aspect of those frankly personal poems, there as the author's idiosyncratic reading of an episode that has been scrutinized every which way—as his effort to reclaim, through inscrutable imagery, the story of his own life and the lives of those who were close to him.

My question, then: How do these things, the pagan and the Christian, fit together? Will they cosmically reconcile, as in the passage at the end of Revelation, the two shores joined by the river that runs through them? Or is reconciliation an earthly affair—is it the business of believing Christians to try to reconcile the two impulses in our own lives and the world around us? Or is no reconciliation necessary, because in the end one set of stories and symbols is as good as another, and you work with what is at hand?

The service was coming to an end; the program indicated a song from *Cymbeline*, followed by the Lord's Prayer. I could see Prince Charles clutching his own program across the way—a man who, like Ted Hughes, had seen his own wife die young and had been blamed for her death, the whole episode taking on the stature of a twentieth-century myth—and it occurred to me that he had sat through her funeral in this very place. Watching Princess Diana's funeral on television, I had been struck by the fact that Westminster Abbey seemed to gain in aura the further its Christian origins and purpose receded into the distance; and now I felt that it was no longer a Christian place at all but a sort of natural wonder, erected in the thirteenth century and maintained for seven hundred years so that modern English people would have someplace grand and solemn in which to pay tribute to their dead.

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun, / Nor the furious winter's rages; / Thou thy worldly task hast done / Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages...." It was Shakespeare, of course, instantly recognizable. "No exorcizer harm thee! / Nor no witchcraft charm thee! / Ghost unlaid forbear thee! / Nothing ill come near thee! / Quiet consummation have; / And renowned be thy grave!" But I could hardly hear the words for the sound of my thoughts. Only later, standing in the courtyard outside the cathedral chatting with some of the other guests, did I realize that the voice reading them aloud had been Ted Hughes's voice, the voice I had supposedly gotten to know him by these past few years. The others exulted: How wonderfully strange it had been to hear Ted speak from beyond the grave! It had been the high point of the service, hadn't it? I nodded agreement. I had missed him, alas; and as I imagined him, near death, reading those lines about death into a tape recorder as though to make sure that he would be present at his own memorial, I recognized what I had admired in Ted Hughes—the craftiness, the fidelity to his great precursors, the unabashedly large sense of himself, the attention to last things; and, though I had never really known him, I missed him all over again. □

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TRANSFIGURATIONS

With a surgical team in Mexico

Kevin P. Glynn

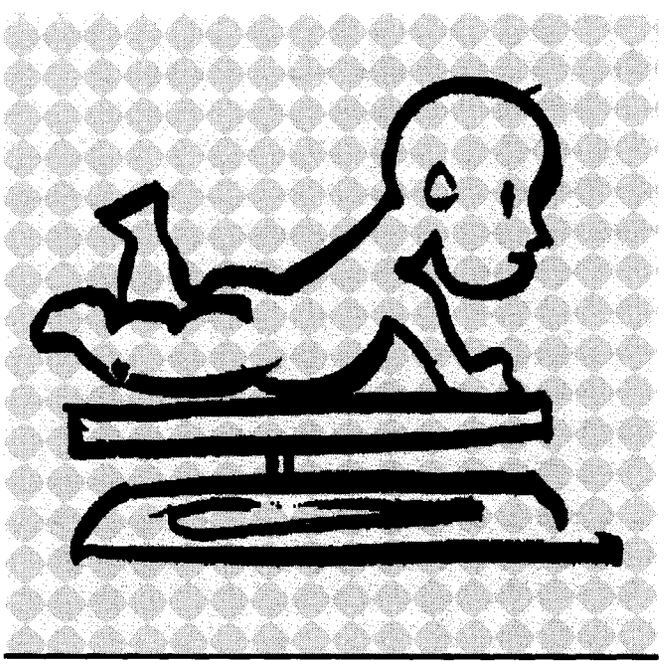
It's been said if one wants to see the face of God, look at the simple beauty of a child. But what if that face has been deformed by a cleft lip, or burn scars stretch over its surface? Can we find God's handiwork manifest in such grotesque accidents? And how ought we to respond?

In February my wife and I were privileged to participate in a trip to the interior of Mexico with a group known as M.O.S.T. (Mercy Outreach Surgical Team). Fourteen physicians, sixteen nurses, and eighteen support personnel journeyed from San Diego, California, to Uruapan, about two hundred miles west of Mexico City in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains. We had three plastic surgeons, three orthopedists, a urologist, a general surgeon, and five pediatric anesthesiologists. I was the internal medicine "sweeper." My job was to deal with complications, such as fevers, unexpected heart murmurs, pulmonary congestion, or in one case, a collapsed lung. But I was also pressed into service to spell assistant surgeons or nurses who needed a break. And sometimes I simply washed instruments or just held crying babies to soothe them on the way to the operating room. My wife worked in post-op. Even though she's been out of professional nursing for several decades while she's raised our children, her experienced calmness in dealing with sick patients who were vomiting, or spitting up blood, reassured the lay volunteers assigned to the area with her.

The idea for M.O.S.T. originated in 1987 when a group of nurses from Mercy Hospital (now Scripps Mercy) in San Diego formed teams to travel to the interior of Mexico to operate on children with various deformities. There are many such volunteer groups scattered around the United States, and while M.O.S.T. may be among the best, it's not unique. Its operation, however, is complex. First, members of the San Diego Rotary Club scout appropriate locations, politick for local support, and provide financial assistance. Then twice each year the team flies off to Mexico and spends a week operating on children who have been brought in from the impoverished countryside.

On a typical day, everyone rises at 5:30 A.M. to get to the hospital, operates until 7 or 8 P.M., goes back to the hotel for a bottle of *cervesa* and collapses until the next morning. At Uruapan the team did 217 procedures in four days, ranging in severity from simple repair of cleft lips to complex flap rotations for burn scars. That's a month's work for an average-size general hospital in the United States. Members of the local Rotary Club arrange for hotel accommodations, and every day club wives outdo one another to prepare lunches for the group. The last night before departure, they treat team members to a colorful fiesta with lots of music, demonstrations of local dances, and sampling of various tequila drinks so that the spirit of camaraderie infects even the most shy. Indeed if there is any risk for the crew it's not hardship but pride because team members are treated like celebrities, with TV coverage, gifts, and community adulation.

What lessons do the visits teach? First is the value of teamwork. While the focus is on the efforts of the plastic surgeons and pediatric orthopedists, they would fail without the contributions of every person on board, and the institutions back in the United States. Furthermore, the Mexican government has to be enlisted to give its ongoing support. Then local doctors and hospital administrators have to be persuaded to turn over their clinics, operating rooms, and post-op recovery areas to these strangers for a week, and accept the disruptions to their own work schedules. The



Kevin P. Glynn, M.D., *is president of the medical staff at Scripps Mercy Hospital in San Diego, California.*

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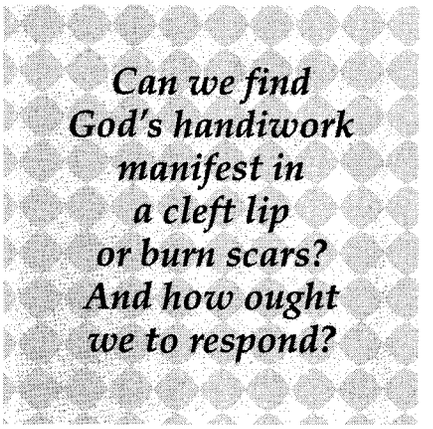
scouts and team members try their best to be polite, since one arrogant comment can neutralize hundreds of hours of diplomatic effort.

The local physicians and officials appreciate the help, but sometimes seem embarrassed that they aren't able to take care of their own people from their own resources. Further, the group purposely seeks out the children of Indians and others who live at the margins of their society. And like the United States, Mexico has a long tradition of maltreating its native population.



The second lesson is the benefit of giving to the giver. The doctors leave their practices and pay their own expenses. The nurses give up vacation time to make the trips. Nevertheless there are plenty of volunteers for M.O.S.T. The limiting factor is usually how many operating tables the local hospital will commit. Some of the local citizens had difficulty believing that the group had no ulterior motive, wasn't seeking to convert anyone, and expected nothing in return. One doctor took an American colleague aside and asked him how much the U.S. government was subsidizing the team. "*Nada*," was the response.

The third lesson is the display of endurance and trust. A sixteen-year-old girl was burned on her face and arms saving her little brother when their house caught fire. After eleven surgical procedures, her left hand was a contracted claw, which the M.O.S.T. team straightened and released. Though the lower half of her face was rough with leathery scars, she was a beautiful young woman whose trusting vulnerability endeared her to all who cared for her. Her brother clung to her leg, cried when he saw the intravenous line inserted, and followed her to the vestibule of the operating room until the nurses restrained him.

Another teen-ager who had previously undergone reconstruction of a cleft lip and palate came to have his nose reduced. When such deformities have been repaired, the nose itself is commonly left broad and flat like a pig's snout, requiring later revision. As he was climbing on the operating table he gave rosaries to the surgeon, scrub nurse, and anesthesiologist. Since many of the staff aren't Catholic, as soon as he went to sleep a theological discussion began about the efficacy of the beads, but there was no debate about his motivation—and all appreciated the gifts.

The Indians' trust is earned slowly. Many of these children have such severe deformities that they have been hidden even from neighbors. Years of gradually accumulated successes were needed before parents would begin to trust their children to the strangers. Local priests have contributed in this regard by persuading the understandably suspicious Indians to let M.O.S.T. work on their children.

Much of M.O.S.T.'s success relates to the fact that the staff is made up of "pros": senior surgeons with skill and judgment, competent nurses ministering to sick children, and energetic support staff who get the job done without being asked. Some institutions have seen similar efforts founder because they have tried to operate with less than their first team. Further, local authorities resent their citizens being used for training American doctors, and so M.O.S.T. has avoided the temptation to use the outreach surgical team for teaching purposes.

Some of the problems are too complicated to be repaired locally, and so an annual "Mercy Day" is held in San Diego in late September. For this, Rotarians fly the children and parents to San Diego, and hospital staff devote a Saturday to mending their disfigurements. Marines from Camp Pendleton bring in cots and take care of the patients and families in the parish hall of Saint John's Church, two miles from the hospital.

There are some disappointments. One little boy had bilateral cleft lips and palate with carious upper teeth growing forward from his gums. His lower jaw was underdeveloped which made him look like a rodent. He was choking on food and was underweight. Attempts had been made to repair the defects several times previously and he came to M.O.S.T. for one last try. The plastic surgeon closed the hole in his palate but had to tell his mother that the chances of its holding were very low and the problems would likely persist. We all knew the boy probably wouldn't survive much longer.

The most difficult times for the team, however, come on the first day, when clinics are held to select the cases. For every three patients accepted, one has to be turned away, not because the problem is too severe to tackle, but because there is a limit to the number of cases that can be done in a week. To see the imploring looks on the parents' faces and to see the deformities left untreated breaks one's heart. As I write this story I am visualizing the disappointment on the face of a father who brought his son to the screening clinic. The youngster had a severe burn scar that had fused his upper arm to his chest wall so that he had no motion of the shoulder or elbow. There was no room on the schedule and we could only invite him to return the next time the team comes to Uruapan. But since M.O.S.T. goes to so many towns, it may be several years before that happens.

M.O.S.T. is a small group and has only a tiny effect in a country as populous as Mexico, but its efforts have improved life for the several thousand children operated on over the last ten years and have enriched the souls of team members nearly as much. The comments of one young girl summarized the overall impact of the team. She had undergone repair of disfiguring facial burn scars on an earlier trip and was returning for a final revision. She told the nurse in pre-op that previously she would hide inside her house. These days she enjoys traveling around the countryside, because, in her own words, "now, I am beautiful." □

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In the palm of God's hand

When my three children were babies, one of the stages I particularly liked was their discovery of their hands. It was so surprising to each one of them in their turn when these objects floating past their line of vision were suddenly recognized and seen for what they were—a part of themselves and under their control. Their hands became their favorite toys, played with endlessly, brought together, pulled apart, put in their mouths, taken out, regarded solemnly, and discovered all over again.

It is a critical part of development and heralds the beginning of the fine motor skills that make the human infant so different from any other creature. So it was with a poignant sense of loss that I read in the pediatrician's notes on our nine-year-old daughter, Moy Moy: "Hand regard returned."

Moy Moy has been a mystery since the very beginning. The child who should never have been conceived (her mother had been sterilized), nor born (her mother wanted an abortion), nor alive (she arrived twelve weeks premature, on the side of a road in a village in India) was all of these things, and our adopted daughter as well. And until the age of five, she went on defying the odds and developing beautifully (she had a mild mental handicap, but she talked and walked and did naughty things and told jokes and held us spellbound with her enchanting personality).

But, unaccountably, each one of the developmental stages we had observed so eagerly in all three of our children began appearing again in Moy Moy, but this time in reverse. One by one, we watched her go through them all again, moving backward in exactly the same order as she had earlier progressed. From running and hopping, she slowed to a walk; as her balance became more precarious, she required someone at her side, holding one hand. Next it was on both sides that she needed support; and later she was back to crawling. In the last few weeks, she has become more tentative about that, preferring to sit in one place, untempted by the toys and books that used to draw her like a magnet, propped up on all sides now by pillows as, even sitting, she cannot be sure of her balance.

In speech it has been the same: From short sentences (witty and often surprisingly subtle) she reverted to three-word phrases, later two, later one, and finally to the wordless babble of the infant (she still chants, however—a sound we all simply love and long to hear). Hand regard reemerged some time ago, and she would sit fascinated by the twirling graceful movements of her fingers; now, although this seems to have disappeared as well, I find myself regarding her hands almost as raptly as she once did.

She is a baby, but so unlike one that her presence invites, or demands, contemplation. I love to hold her in my arms and listen to music; she sits so quietly that I have to keep checking to see if she is awake. Her breathing has the rhythmic cadence of sleep and yet there is a quality of receptive alertness which suggests a heightened awareness. I find myself thinking in new ways as I gaze at her, her small hand in mine—almost as if our bodies have merged and I am, like her, moving through time not toward the end of the day or the week, but toward eternity. A Zen Buddhist teacher once instructed his student to "show me your original face." It is the work of a lifetime and generally happens only through hard discipline. Moy Moy is achieving it as lightly as a butterfly.

One day while sitting with her, I remembered a line from a hymn we sang when I was growing up: "I will never forget you, my people/ I have carved you in the palm of my hand."

It is a strange image, not at all the gentle, loving one we get in the old Irish blessing ("May God hold you in the palm of his hand"). This is a fierce one, a violent one, one which promises pain and suffering in exchange for God's regard: Why "carved"? It was while I was puzzling over this that I realized I had to stop saying that Moy Moy was regressing or going backward: such negative, censorious words in our progress-oriented society. The Christian vision consistently turns things upside down, valuing and praising those very states that the world rejects—weakness, poverty, suffering, and death—and calling them by other names: humility, blessedness, power, victory.

When I consider Moy Moy and the intensity of her life's carving in the palm of God's hand, I can only believe that his regard for her must be as intense. I believe he is studying her, with a mercy and a love so enticing it can only call her forward to him. It is one of those mysteries of our faith that in going to him, she seems to be moving backward in time, while in fact, like all true mystics, she is disregarding it. □

Jo McGowan *and her family live in India. She is founder of Karuna Vihar, a school for children with special needs in Dehra Doon.*

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Garden Plot Near Woods

"Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet."
Gerard Manley Hopkins

It's been years since he bent
with a hoe, or hosed creekwater onto
his plantings.
New vines burn rust
into thickets of asparagus,
marigold gone unruly and raspberry reborn
year after year.
His hedge of cornflowers gone dry
re-seeds second purples and pinks.
Dandelions puff a foot high,
old summer phlox tangle with four o'clocks
growing like weeds in the weeds.

What becomes of cultivated
toil, the plants it tenders
to showpiece bloom? I make my way
through scents of green singe and mint
and uproot nothing.
He would like this fraying sprawl
even now—how it quickens
toward wildness along the south slope.
On a lime-green stump,
moss thickens like short fur,
and mushrooms rise in new flesh,
old whiteness amid entanglements
that simply move on
toward a patience of creek stones.

The Wilderness of Common Days

Brief rain in the trees, flicker
of leaves, a few shadows returning.
Light coils back at edges of cloud;
the sun elongates at the horizon.
Garden berries picked wet in pails,
weeding undone,
you lie on the summer porch,
eyes losing focus toward sights
that lead into sleep and may never
be remembered. The dreamer becomes the dream
and sets out to wander.
When you return, time has settled
for darkness,
and from sub-paths where you have been
you bring a sense of both loss and gain
from two worlds of need
that have tried to join.
Before the moon rises, scoured clean,
the sky pales to a rinsed ink-blue.
You cannot say how it happens:
darkness becoming something else
on its way to being light.
Some moments it is enough
to simply watch with empty hands
and sometimes open eyes.

Dixie Partridge

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Richard Alleva

NOT CRAP, NOT GREAT

'Star Wars: Episode I, The Phantom Menace'

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace arrived after six months of unprecedented ballyhoo that prompted hundreds of people to camp outside theaters literally for days in order to see...the previews! What film could live up to such expectations? The cinematic equivalent of *War and Peace*, the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and Wagner's *Ring* cycle all miraculously blended into one slam-bang work of art? I doubt it. And what kind of movie, in fact, has *The Phantom Menace* turned out to be?

A pretty good movie. No more. No less. A pretty good, efficiently made, second-rate science fiction movie that cost a gazillion dollars and is expected to earn a hundred gazillion. Is that what all the press rage ("Crap!" shrieked Anthony Lane in the *New Yorker*) is really about? And is that why the box office returns, though quite impressive, aren't living up to predictions? Because a movie that cost so much, that was ten years in incubation and six more years in actual production, simply had to deliver more than it actually delivers? Or was it because the first three *Star Wars* were so great and this new installment falls so far short? But I saw all three again upon their re-releases two years ago and, though I enjoyed them once again, I saw no greatness then just as I see no cause for Mr. Lane's outcry now.

But is there justice in any of the accusations—the charge of racism, for instance? Well, the amphibious creature, Jar Jar, who serves as comic foil, does bear a fair resemblance in gait to Steppin Fetchit, while his speech mannerisms are akin to Butterfly McQueen's. But will the kids who compose the bulk of the audience for *Menace* actually know who Fetchit and McQueen were?

Another criticism is right on target: The acting is bad and bad nearly straight across the board. The trusty Liam Neeson brings his wonted dignity and strength to the Jedi master Qui-Gon-Jinn but also gives the first dull performance of his career, probably because he got bored performing with a cast half of which was computer-generated. (Still, Bob Hoskins surmounted the same problem in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*) Ewan McGregor is a flyweight as Obi-Wan Kenobi (this guy ages into Alec Guinness?), and Natalie Portman is a joke as Queen Amidala. Twenty years ago, Harrison Ford, after playing Han Solo in the first *Star Wars* film, complained that George Lucas knew nothing about directing actors. Lucas has learned nothing since.

On the other hand, I don't think that another charge, that Lucas's storytelling and staging are klunky, has merit. But all the criticisms, fair and unfair, are, I suspect, motivated by something in the nature of the *Star Wars* cycle that has always been there but only now, after twenty years, penetrates critical and popular awareness.

And that is the utter provinciality of the mind and sensibility of George Lucas. The opening credits of each installment announce, "In a galaxy long ago and far away," yet we never get out of Southern California! Each of the four completed episodes is an artifact confected by the ten-year-old, California-suburban, comic-book reading, pinball playing, TV watching, neighborhood-movie-theater frequenting proto-nerd that still survives within Lucas's head.

This was clear from the very start in 1977, when we found that the hero of this intergalactic epic was to be a snub-nosed, blonde, surfer-type named Luke Skywalker, that the heroine looked like the pretty Jewish girl next door, and that the secondary hero, Han Solo, was a clone of all those Bogart tough guys who start out cynical and wind up on the side of the angels. True, Darth Vader was a more original creation, but it's in the Hollywood tradition to allow the villain some malevolent uniqueness. I already hear the objection: but *Star Wars* is popular everywhere in Europe and Asia! To which I reply: Southern California rules the world. It is the Pop Empire of the mind. This works to make *Star Wars* accepted pop mythology.

To be sure, the overall narrative isn't provincial, for there are universal implications to any story about oppressed people, divinely destined liberators, black-clad villains, a "force" that represents divine virtue, fallen knights who turn into monsters (think of Klingsor in Wagner's *Parsifal*), and sons who outdo their heroic fathers by clinging to absolute virtue (think of Malory's Galahad finding the Grail while his formidable but adulterous father, Lancelot, fails). Schematically, *Star Wars* is a true descendant of chivalric legends.

But, in a work of art or even pop entertainment, God is in the details, in the tone and diction and visual rhetoric. And it was in its execution, in the California-cute casting and in the tooth-aching All-American dialogue that Lucas betrayed his provinciality.

Menace has more of the same. The director dresses his heroine like a Chinese princess out of *Turandot*, but every time Natalie Portman opens her mouth, it's *Valley Girl* time. The character of Jar Jar may act like Steppin Fetchit, and the villainous heads of the Trade Federation may sound like the "Japs" of World War II movies, but this isn't because Lucas is a racist. He most certainly is not. But he simply can't get those 1930s and 1940s movies (that he watched on TV in the 1950s) out of his head, and they were crammed with stereotypes. One man's racism may, I fear, be another man's visual mythology and, though Lucas draws on Arthurian myth for his story, he depends on old Hollywood for his visual and verbal language. And I sense that people are just beginning to tire of this.

Lucas's provinciality particularly disables him when he has to create a conceptually bold character. Anakin Skywalker

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is a gallant, even angelic kid who will nevertheless grow into the ferocious Darth Vader, avatar of the "Dark Side." So this role had to be cast with a boy possessing a certain inherent strangeness which could subtly suggest genius and malevolence and doom. (Martin Stephens in *The Innocents* possessed exactly this palette.) So whom did Lucas cast? A boy who is indistinguishable from any of the kid actors who infest Saturday morning TV programs. But, then again, for Lucas, perhaps, Saturday morning TV is a viable version of childhood.

However:

Lucas may be unable to create interesting human characters but he is a whiz at the fabrication of fantastic creatures and the realms they inhabit. Jar Jar is tiresome but the king of Jar Jar's fellow Gungans is a worthy cousin of Kenneth Grahame's Mr. Toad, being both impossibly pompous and unexpectedly generous. When this king has a tantrum and shakes his head while foaming at the mouth, he makes even slobber seem a royal prerogative.

Other creatures are just as delightful. Anakin's master, owner of a sort of intergalactic hardware store, is a gigantic mosquito with that insect's ability to annoy and sting (one's wallet). At the arena where Anakin races his "pod" (racing car), the announcer has two heads, each of which eggs on the other just the way our network sports announcers do. (Here is Lucas's provinciality working positively.) For the scene in which underwater monsters attack the Jedi's miniature sub, Lucas has come up with creatures based on the standard underwater horrors—dinosaurs and sharks—but he has distorted and rearranged body parts just enough to suggest something extraterrestrial. The same goes for the pack animals in the desert scenes, creative variations on camels and llamas that are just exotic enough to titillate but not so strange that they distract us from the narrative.

Lucas has always been a good action director and in this department he has gotten better. The pod race is derived from the chariot race in *Ben-Hur* but the imitation is even better than the prototype. There is a laser-sword duel between the two Jedi and an assassin, Darth Maul, which is a model of how to shoot such scenes. Lucas situates the combat in a palace room of mounting platforms with force fields functioning as transparent sliding doors that often separate the warriors and temporarily interrupt the fight. This gives the action ebb and flow, plus variety in composition and point of view. At one pass, with Obi-Wan incapacitated, a force field separates Qui-Gon from Darth Maul. The noble Jedi lowers himself to the floor, shepherding his strength like a yogi, but the assassin, insatiable in his blood lust, paces back and forth like a caged wolf. This moment isn't just an effective ploy for increasing suspense; it's good characterization. To compare this scene with the monotonous kung fu matches in *The Matrix* is to understand the difference between the artful use of violence and the lazy exploitation of noise and special effects.

And that duel in *Menace* is only one of the four areas of combat in the big battle scene that climaxes the movie. Lucas cuts from one zone to another with a skill worthy of D.W. Griffith, and he keeps the far-flung action coherent, tense, and increasingly suspenseful.

Lucas may be spotty as a director but he is infallible as a producer. (The producer's relation to the director is the armorer's to the knight.) He has gotten his designers, technicians, cameraman, editors, and composer to do their best work. The composer John Williams has evidently been listening to *Carmina Burana* and *Carnival of the Animals*, but he's synthesized his influences nicely. The scoring of the concluding victory march brings the story to a surging close.

So *The Phantom Menace* is a masterpiece, right? Get that word outta here! This movie isn't great, it isn't the heir of Malory or Wagner, it isn't the artistic counterpart of the collected works of Carl Jung or Joseph Campbell, it isn't the secular religion *Star Wars* fans want it to be. It is...a pretty good movie. An underrated overrated movie. If you've stayed away you could go to it casually and you might have a great casual time. □

ART

Donna Gustafson

THE ARTFUL HEALER

'Cézanne to van Gogh: The Collection of Dr. Gachet'

At the center of "Cézanne to van Gogh: The Collection of Dr. Gachet," on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York until August 15, is the relationship between the homeopathic physician Dr. Paul Gachet (1828–1909) and the brilliant, short-lived painter Vincent van Gogh (1853–90). The story begins with the elder of the pair whose willingness to accept paintings in lieu of money for his medical services, coupled with his sincere appreciation for the most advanced art of his time, gave him a certain renown in the artistic circles within which both Vincent and his brother Theo traveled. Gachet had settled in Auvers-sur-Oise in 1872, a small village north of Paris made attractive to a number of artists with the arrival of the landscape painter, Charles Daubigny. The impressionist painter Camille Pissarro and his family moved to nearby Pontoise in the summer of 1872, followed soon after by Pissarro's young protégé, Paul Cézanne. Pissarro had known Gachet since 1871 and had called on him from time to time to treat members of his family. An amateur artist, Gachet exhibited some of his own work under the pseudonym, Paul van Ryssel. His home in Auvers was a gathering place for artists where still lifes were set up and painted, etchings were produced in the attic studio, and painting excursions were planned. Gachet built a collection of paintings, prints, sketches, artifacts, and souvenirs

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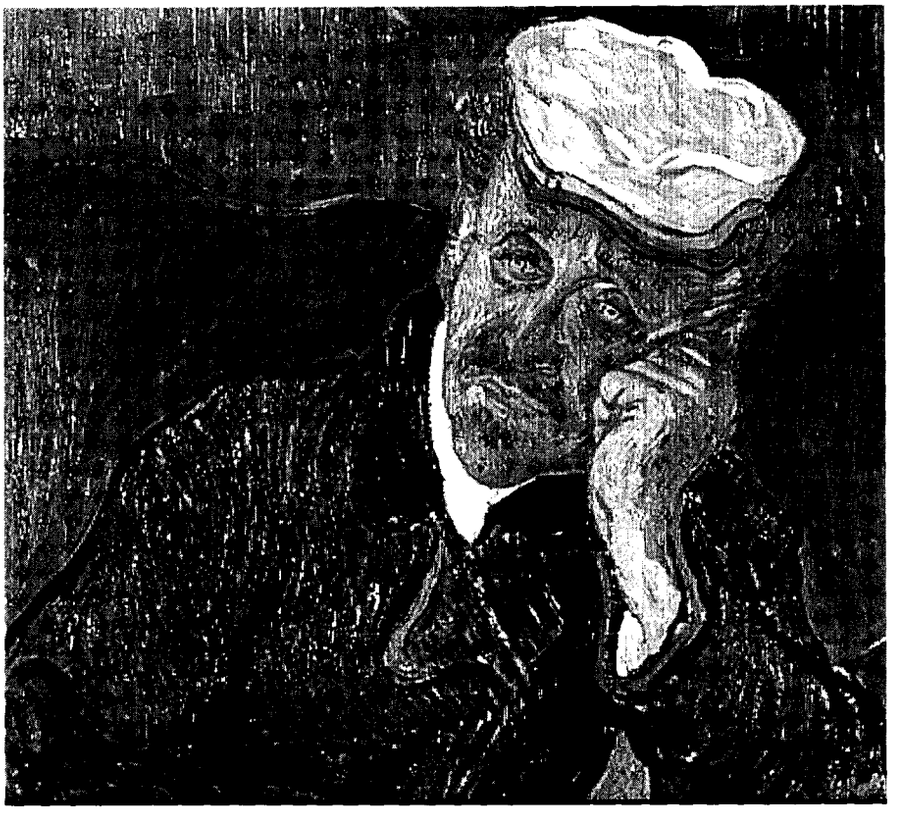
given to him by his patients, friends, and colleagues.

In December of 1888, van Gogh was in Arles painting at breakneck speed and producing some of his most accomplished works. Without warning, he suffered the first in a series of unexplained and violent seizures. Subsequently, it was impossible for him to live without medical supervision. Hospitalized after cutting off part of his ear, he was released, then readmitted after the local population petitioned to have him incarcerated. To avoid the police, van Gogh voluntarily placed himself in the asylum of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole in Saint-Remy-de-Provence where he continued to suffer from periodic incapacitating fits. It was here that his disease was finally diagnosed as epilepsy. Shut off from family (most significantly his brother Theo, whose emotional and financial support was critical for Vincent's survival) and friends, the painter was desperate to leave the south of France. His brother worried about Vincent's condition and his own ability to manage a future crisis, so Theo proposed that van Gogh stay in Auvers under the care of Dr. Gachet. On May 20, 1890 the artist arrived in Auvers, met the doctor, and took up temporary lodgings in a nearby inn. In a letter to Theo written that day, Vincent describes the doctor as "being rather eccentric," adding that "his experience as a doctor must keep him balanced enough to combat the nervous trouble from which he certainly seems to be suffering at least as seriously as I." Gachet's interventions failed. On July 28, 1890 van Gogh shot himself in the chest. Walking back to his room he called the doctor to his deathbed. According to letters that were written later by friends of van Gogh, the painter refused all attempts to save his life.

Gachet, whose collection is the starting point for the Metropolitan exhibition, was himself immortalized in two paintings and an etching by van Gogh, all three produced in the last weeks of the painter's life. The larger of the two paintings was taken to Paris by Theo after his brother's suicide. It is a masterly portrait, recently made spectacularly famous by fetching the unprecedented sum of $82.5 million when it was sold at auction in New York in 1990 (sadly, its current whereabouts is unknown). The copy that van Gogh made and gave to Dr. Gachet was enshrined in the Gachets' home in Auvers until 1949 when it was given to the French national museums by Gachet's son and daughter. It differs from what is presumed to be the first portrait in that it does not include the books stacked on the table on which Gachet leans. The portrait is one of several sublime paintings by van Gogh once owned by Gachet and brought together by the exhibition organizers. Also on view is van Gogh's infinitely sad, perfectly transcendent *Self-portrait* (given by Gachet's children to the Musée du Louvre in 1949), and the breathtakingly beautiful *Church at Auvers*, done in 1890. There are also important paintings by Cézanne, Pissarro, Monet, and Renoir (all given to the French national museums by Dr. Gachet's son Paul between 1951 and 1954).



The suspicions about the doctor's abilities that Vincent raised in his letters to his family, the odd secrecy with which the Gachets shrouded the collection, and the copies of van Gogh's work produced by Gachet, his son, and other amateur artists in their circle have long fueled speculation about the doctor's role in the artist's suicide. The family's financial motives, and the authenticity of a number of paintings in the collection, most notably the *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* now in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, have also been questioned. These controversies have mostly been put to rest, but this exhibition and the book that accompanies it resolve any lingering doubts on these scores. The final room in the exhibition suggests the shrine to van Gogh and Dr. Gachet that the Gachet residence became after the death of the doctor. Alongside souvenirs of Vincent van Gogh that decorated the home in Auvers are hung a series of portraits done by Dr. Gachet at van Gogh's deathbed. I imagine that van Gogh knew his fate when he stepped off the train in Auvers. What surprises me is that Gachet recognized the painter of genius for who he was. □

Donna Gustafson *is chief curator of exhibitions for the American Federation of Arts.*

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How not to read the Bible

Abraham on Trial
The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth
Carol Delaney
Princeton University Press, $29.95, 296 pp.

The Curse of Cain
The Violent Legacy of Monotheism
Regina M. Schwartz
University of Chicago Press, $14, 211 pp.

Luke Timothy Johnson

The authors of these books share a sense of high moral purpose. Delaney wants fathers to stop sacrificing their sons. Schwartz wants people to welcome rather than exclude one another. Each author also has hold of a truth. Delaney sees that patriarchy has its limitations. Schwartz perceives that monotheism can generate intolerance. Both writers connect their moral passion and social insight to a reading of a part of the Bible, regarded as the source of the "legacy" of carelessness and violence in contemporary culture. Delaney focuses on the story of Abraham. Schwartz deals with Torah and the Prophets.

However, high moral purpose does not necessarily translate into clear thinking. The grasp of a single truth seldom makes for a satisfying argument. And blaming the Bible for what's wrong in the world is an exercise both too easy and too simplistic to be convincing. These books are of interest less as resources for serious social and religious inquiry than as indicators of troubling tendencies in the academic study of religion today.

Delaney's title expresses the conceit structuring her essay, playing on the tradition that Abraham's offering of Isaac in Gen. 22:1-24 (known as the Akedah) was one of Abraham's "trials" (or "testings"), as well as on the coincidence of her happening to be an observer of a recent California trial in which a man who killed his daughter offered as justification the claim "God told me to do it." Convinced that this poor deluded man was a symbol for a massive cultural pattern of child abuse, Delaney turns from her earlier research on procreation and patriarchy in Turkey to the patriarch Abraham.

Part 1 prosecutes this small part of the Abraham story for its role in sponsoring all abuse of children through the ages, including sending them off to be killed in war. The logic of patriarchy, Delaney claims, is that the child should die so that the father might live. That a man killed his daughter and used Abraham as an excuse is not anomalous but the typical enactment of the cultural script created by the Akedah as "foundation story" for Western patriarchy. The story reflects and helps establish the false inference that fathers have absolute control over their children based on the false premise that the male seed is the only active agent in procreation. Where is the child's voice in the story, asks Delaney, where is the mother's voice? How can this, this *patriarch*, get away with slaughtering his son?

Critical to Delaney's argument is showing that the Akedah is a foundation story for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Part 2 is therefore devoted to archaeological and biblical evidence concerning child sacrifice in antiquity. Here she reaches conclusions opposite to those of Jon Levenson, whose *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (Yale University Press, 1993) suggests that the Abraham story actually works against a pattern of child-sacrifice that was sporadically practiced even within Israel. It would seem that on prima facie evidence, Levenson would win the argument, since God stays Abraham's hand at the end and replaces Isaac with the ram for sacrifice. If the story functions etiologically, it would be most obviously read as foundational for animal rather than child sacrifice. But Delaney ends up insisting that even if Abraham did not actually kill Isaac he still was wrong for giving absolute obedience to a higher authority.

"Wait and see which one eats the apple first, and we'll make the other one head of the family."

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Delaney constructs her "defense" of Abraham by examining the uses made of the Akedah story by the respective religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The kindest comment to be made on this section is that as a student of religious literary traditions, Delaney proves she is mainly an anthropologist who has done field work in Turkey. She relies chiefly on secondary sources, which are of uneven quality. The main difficulty, though, is that the "cultural legacy" of the Abraham story never appears to be what Delaney has hypothesized. These traditions have done strange things, but invoking Abraham as the justification for abusing children has not been one of them. In the case of Christianity, Delaney's focus on Abraham causes her to miss the New Testament's interpretation of Jesus as the child who gives his life so that others might live, and the gospel's powerful testimony concerning the welcoming and care of children. In the case of Judaism, she disapproves of the way the Akedah functioned as the model for martyrdom for some medieval Jews and for Jews in the Holocaust, but she cannot make the case that such piety privileged parents—especially fathers—over their children. In Islam, she can find no link at all between the rich use of Abraham traditions and the social legacy of child abuse, so she must grumble in general about the privileging of males in Islamic cultures, based on the same misconceptions concerning conception that are found in the Abraham story. Plus, she dislikes monotheism in general: "Monotheism and monogenesis constitute an integrated and mutually reinforcing system. And in this system, the story of Abraham is central."

So what to do? Better biology enables us to write better stories that can support better social arrangements...and better gods, too. Just about at this point, the reader understands how everything serves the agenda announced by Delaney in her introduction, "But for those of us concerned with dismantling patriarchy, it is important to understand the power of this *most* patriarchal of stories." No matter that this is probably not the most patriarchal of stories (the Bible has plenty from which to choose), or that the effect of the story has not been what Delaney claims. The point is to dismantle a social system by deconstructing its supposed mythic foundations. That she has signally failed to establish *either* that the Akedah is anything like a "foundation story" in the three monotheistic traditions of the West *or* that the story functioned as warrant for the neglect and abuse of children, matters little; Delaney pushes forward.

Part 3 deals with "The Testimony of Psychoanalysis," although the reader is never told why the topic should be considered—beyond the fact that Freud is such a visible symbol of patriarchy. And as with her survey of religious traditions, Delaney is mostly disappointed. Freud never really deals with Abraham, even though Delaney thinks he should have. Her examination of Freud's "blind spot" seeks to explain why he based his monotheism on Moses and not Abraham, rather than why in the face of all the evidence to the contrary she thinks the Akedah is a "foundation story" for patriarchy. Worse, successors of Freud have amended his oversight by discussing Abraham in relation to fatherhood, but their failure is even more profound than Freud's because they either disagree with Delaney's reading of the story or they fail to criticize patriarchy.

Having failed to find either in religion or in psychoanalysis any real support for her thesis that the binding of Isaac is the root of all patriarchal evil, she resorts in her final section, "The Social Legacy," to straightforward unsubstantiated assertion: Her "purpose is not to show that religion is essentially or primarily *about* abuse. But it is about power and authority, the abuse of which is all too common." Delaney therefore works with the model that religiously faithful fathers ought to be willing to sacrifice their sons to God as the basis of the physical abuse of children: "the sacrifice and betrayal of children is...bound up with patriarchal authority, which in turn, is bound up with the foundation story of our culture." Not only physical abuse, of course, but also sexual abuse, poverty, and war, are to be blamed on this story. She concludes by proposing that we need a new myth in which the child is the model of faith rather than the father. She seems not to have realized that Christianity proposed precisely that with the faith of Jesus.

The Curse of Cain, Regina Schwartz's lament over biblical monotheism, is better written but not much better argued than Delaney's indictment of Abraham. As Delaney began with asking "Where was Sarah," Schwartz begins with a student's question concerning the conquest of the land by the Israelites: "What about the Canaanites?" A legitimate question, indeed, and one famously asked by James Gustafson some thirty years ago in his warning against the simplistic readings of Scripture found in some liberation theologies (*see* "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," *Interpretation* 24 [1970]). Apparently unaware that anyone before her had considered that the biblical stories might contain some moral ambiguities, she pursues the troubling way in which monotheism within the Bible seems to establish identity by means of exclusion rather than by means of inclusion.

Schwartz considers in turn the invention of identity through covenants, establishing identity through possession of the land, making identity natural through kinship, dividing identity through nations, and inscribing identity through memory. In each discussion she picks out those elements in the biblical account that move in the direction of exclusion and passes over those elements that move in the direction of hospitality, peace, and mutual embrace, not to mention God's universal care for all humans. The resulting reading has a certain power, of course, as do all readings that eliminate complexity and ambiguity in service of a simple thesis. There is power as well in Schwartz's citation of the frightening ways in which just such exclusive claims continue to support the divisive and violent politics of identity. She has named something important, namely the virus

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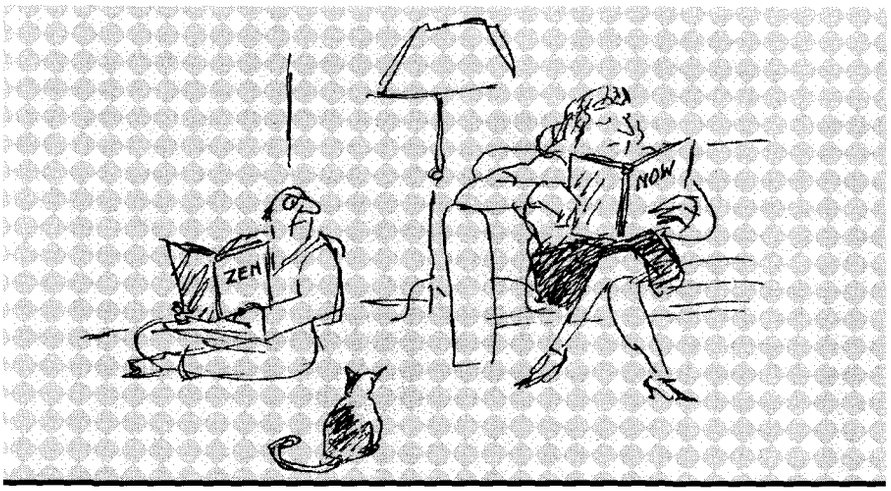

of intolerance that attaches itself to some forms of monotheistic belief and that has been used to justify inhuman behavior by divine warrant.

Like Delaney, Schwartz takes a run at that famous reader of the Bible, Sigmund Freud. As Delaney thinks that a better grasp of the mechanics of reproduction could help reverse patriarchy, so Schwartz offers the insight that a premise of scarcity—in resources—underlies both monotheism and hatred, which could be turned around if humans could only develop an ethics of plenitude in its place. And as Delaney wants to scrap the Abraham story in favor of new foundation myths that are better for children, so Schwartz concludes that the Bible is simply too monotheistic for safety, and must be replaced. She ends her book this way: "When I began this project, I anticipated concluding with the injunction from Augustine to 'close the book.' For him, faith had superseded it; for me, its ancient agonistic values are far too dangerous to continue authorizing. But I have come to understand that urge in a new light. The old 'monotheistic' Book must be closed so that the new books might be fruitful and multiply. After all, that was the first commandment."

These books are written by well-placed academics: Delaney is an associate professor of anthropology at Stanford and has a divinity degree from Harvard; Schwartz is a professor of English at Northwestern and director of the Chicago Institute of Religion, Ethics, and Violence. They are published by respected university presses, and have the sort of approving comments from other academics on their covers that suggest appreciative readings. What can they tell us about the academic study of religion today?

They indicate first of all just how far from living religious traditions many academic students of religion have moved. The tone adopted by each book toward the texts studied is distant and even hostile. Neither the Bible nor the traditions deriving from the Bible appear to make any claim on the authors. They do not seek to reform elements within religious traditions that may be distorting or harmful. Rather, they seek to replace those traditions with new books and new stories. The implied readership of these books, furthermore, is also clearly not any faith community but fellow academics who already tend to share the authors' ideological predilections and social-scientific reductions.

For those familiar with the sad unwinding of the religious studies experiment in American universities over the past decade, none of this is particularly surprising. More disconcerting is the remarkable and unembarrassed ignorance of religious traditions revealed by these books. First, both authors work with a simplistic notion of how texts serve as cultural scripts within actual religious communities. They seem never to have considered the complex ways in which multiple texts work together—in combination with a variety of other practices—for identity formation, not in a linear but in a complex and dialectical way. They pose as students of religious texts yet show no awareness of how religious people actually use those texts.

Second, our authors do not find it necessary to play fair with the literary complexities of the Bible. I mean here not only theories of composition and cultural contextualization found in scholarly biblical research, but the ways in which voices within the canon are truly different. To put it simply, the "monotheism" of Isaiah is not the same as the "monotheism" of Joshua, and the "monotheism" of Paul is still something else. Schwartz objects to Northrop Frye's typological reading of the entire Bible, but she ends up being no less totalizing. She recognizes a diversity of voices, but ultimately recognizes only the one she detests; rather than enlivening those elements of the text that can generate a celebration of difference (and they are many, especially in the New Testament), she wants to start over with new stories. Delaney systematically suppresses the complexities of the Abraham story (including Sarah's sometimes ambiguous roles) in order to create her preferred cultural script.

Third, the authors show no depth of knowledge or appreciation for the astonishing history of biblical interpretation that has struggled before them with precisely the problems they have located in the text. The function of such interpretation within both Judaism and Christianity has not been to reinforce the violent tendencies of the stories, but to mitigate and transmute them. Midrash and allegory represent strategies of reading within religious traditions that seek to combine loyalty and criticism, that try to save those aspects of the text that give life while also challenging those elements that are morally questionable. Neither author shows any awareness that the theological projects of Irenaus and Origen alike were generated by the need to discover the truth God spoke within words that were all too human.

Our authors return us to the hyper-literalism of a Marcion, and for the same reason: to dismiss the morally unaccept-

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able God thus revealed, and replace him with one better suited to their desires. What distinguishes them from Marcion is what makes them such perfect representatives of the contemporary world of academic discourse, namely their blithe assumption that religion is nothing more than a social construct and human projection, that God is a symbol infinitely malleable and manipulable, and that all religious discourse is a matter of mapping the play of human politics.

They do not appear to grasp that a scarcity of resources (Schwartz's complaint against the Bible's outlook on most things) is a brutal fact of too much human existence—both in antiquity and today—and not simply an ideological position. They do not seem to appreciate that cultures not influenced by the Bible—with "other stories" and sometimes with "many gods"—have shown themselves more patriarchal, exclusive, violent, and negligent of children than those shaped by the Bible. Most of all, their intellectual embrace is not sufficiently large to entertain the possibility that the Bible may be dealing with experiences of a reality inaccessible to social-scientific reduction, may be grappling with truths more elusive and compelling than "identity formation," may indeed be revealing a world both more capacious and gracious than that of academic utopias. □

Luke Timothy Johnson's *most recent book is* Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel *(HarperSanFrancisco). He is the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament at Emory University's Candler School of Theology.*

SOMETHING HAPPENED

Catholics and American Culture
Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team
Mark S. Massa
Crossroad, $24.95, 278 pp.

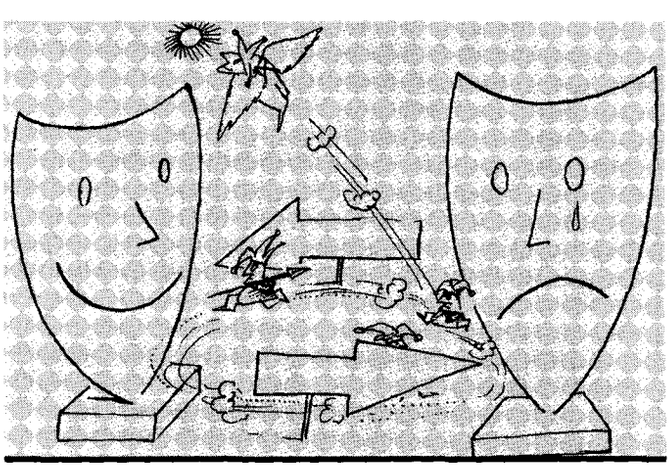
James T. Fisher

Students of twentieth-century American Catholicism have been known to congratulate one another on the sly for choosing a field replete with colorful and fascinating characters and dramatic, compelling events. Many of these memorable figures and singular happenings are treated in Mark Massa's thoroughly engaging study of *Catholics and American Culture.*

Massa, a Jesuit who teaches church history and American studies at Fordham University, has produced a sweeping and dramatic account of American Catholicism's headlong tumble into cultural legitimacy between 1945 and 1970. From Leonard Feeney, the Cambridge Jesuit who fulminated against the infidels at nearby Harvard in the late 1940s, to the women of the Immaculate Heart of Mary congregation in Los Angeles, whose reformist zeal rocked the church and captivated the secular media in the late 1960s, Massa deftly shows how "public" Catholics "moved from the margins to the center stage of American culture in the years after World War II, with mixed results from a theological point of view." Along the way Massa provides fresh interpretations of the cultural and theological work of such old favorites as Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Fulton J. Sheen. He even explains the spiritual significance of the epochal 10–10 tie between the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame and the Michigan State Spartans in their 1966 "Game of the Century."

Given this array of material, Massa wisely eschews the quest for a "master narrative" in favor of a nicely integrated collection of "'soundings' of representative figures and events that offer an important glimpse of 'how we started there and ended up here.'" "There" is the immediate postwar era of Paul Blanshard's best-selling, Ivy League-endorsed attacks on the Catholic church, while "here" finds Catholics enjoying such thorough mastery of American culture by the late 1990s that they "appeared to have inherited the millennial kingdom" once the exclusive province of their erstwhile Protestant adversaries.

In the spirit of James Joyce's dictum that Catholicism means "here comes everybody," *Catholics and American Culture* features an eclectic methodology that might be dubbed "here come all the social theorists," as each chapter is animated by works of one or more seminal thinkers, often to great effect. In his chapter on Leonard Feeney, for example, Massa adapts the "deviance" theories of sociologist Emile Durkheim and anthropologist Mary Douglas to bolster his argument that Feeney's manic insistence on "no salvation outside the church" was doctrinally sound in the church of 1948, but "the experience of postwar American Catholicism itself" in a pluralistic society had rendered this teaching perilous to the life of the community. Feeney, as Massa notes, was disciplined for disobedience rather than heresy (two decades after the contro-



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versy Avery Dulles could still describe Feeney's "doctrine" as "solid." Evelyn Waugh, on the other hand, called the Jesuit "stark raving mad...a case of demonic possession and jolly frightening" after witnessing Feeney preach at the Saint Benedict's Center in Cambridge).

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz's model of "religion as a cultural system" is enlisted to bolster Massa's claim that Senator Joseph R. McCarthy "recognized the congruence between his political concerns and the symbol system that many American Catholics already shared," in building a loyal constituency of coreligionists. By the 1950s, however, a smaller but influential group of Catholics had emerged who were committed to a very different cultural system "in which religious symbols no longer functioned in primarily tribal or class terms." Massa argues that this cohort, who was critical of McCarthy and found its values reflected in the pages of *America* and *Commonweal*, was driven—no less than the senator's vociferous Catholic supporters—by a profoundly religious world view with a distinctive "cultural cast to it."

Massa's wit and generosity leaven a work that might otherwise have sunk under the freight of its prolific "modeling." The deeply Niebuhrian sense of Christian irony Massa weaves throughout his story proves highly efficacious as well, especially in his treatment of Dorothy Day, whose purported separatism was actually deeply rooted in her mastery of certain American cultural traditions that in turn made her by far the most effective Catholic radical in American history (this reviewer was once invested in a similar interpretive posture toward the Catholic Worker movement, as duly noted by Massa). A stirring account of the battle between Cardinal Francis McIntyre and the Immaculate Heart of Mary community in Los Angeles in 1967–68 extends Massa's sense of irony to the outskirts of tragedy. The IHM insurgents—led by Mother Mary Humilata Caspary and the noted pop artist Corita Kent—were thwarted in their efforts to institute sweeping "liberal changes" in the order's rule and the lifestyle of its members, but since an ecumenical council of "the highest body" of the church "had itself authorized and mandated" a spirit of change, the legitimacy of the sisters' reform imperative "at least rivaled the legitimacy of the concerns of the archbishop of Los Angeles." Massa views both McIntyre and the IHM nuns as "ironic pawns of that same Holy Spirit who had inspired conservative Pope John to call Vatican II in the first place, with results that no one could have foreseen, predicted, or approved."

Only rarely does Massa's intrepid quest to link cultural change with theological innovation result in a slight overreach. While the 1966 Notre Dame-Michigan State gridiron contest is a rich subject, it is not always clear how the tilt—and its inconclusive outcome—apotheosized the "new" Notre Dame at the height of the Hesburgh era (and though Massa claims the tie did not jeopardize Notre Dame's hope for a bowl bid in 1966, the Irish actually es-

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chewed postseason contests altogether between 1925 and 1970, a trivial point but for those who—in Massa's own spirit—view Notre Dame football history as a subfield of historical theology). These minor quibbles aside, Mark Massa has constructed his own compelling model for a new form of American Catholic studies.

Massa's eclectic approach is in fact so effective that—his disclaimer notwithstanding—*Catholics and American Culture* even embodies a new "master narrative" gradually emerging within American Catholic studies, characterized by a command of secular social theory and a sober appraisal of the theological losses incurred through cultural accommodation. (Massa's contention tnat the contributions of Merton and Sheen—for all their spiritual rigor—were diluted into "commodities" for mass consumption echoes a growing theme in the work of young scholars.) Massa's work stands out, however, for its gracious tone, located in the vast if often unexplored midrange between the jeremiad and the triumphal.

While *Catholics and American Culture* brilliantly limns "the background era to contemporary American Catholicism," we should not entirely overlook the claims of a counternarrative. Does anyone doubt that it was much easier for a Catholic to gain the presidential nomination of a major political party in 1960 than it will be in 2000, or in any subsequent election so long as the politics of abortion pits some Catholic politicians against the church while others are marginalized by the logic of "pluralism"?

Mario Cuomo is one public theologian who would certainly have to figure prominently in a sequel to *Catholics and American Culture*. Something has clearly changed in the past two decades, and we will be fortunate indeed if a historian of the next generation animates this period for us with the lucidity Massa applies to an era now clearly part of our past. □

James T. Fisher, *author of* Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927–61, *teaches in the Theological Studies Department at Saint Louis University.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

They are a sign of the new springtime of the church, prepared by Pope John Paul II. Our future priests give many of us renewed hope for the new evangelization on the threshold of a new millennium.

As for one person's expressed despondency after reading the *Times* article, I have received dozens of letters from people uplifted and encouraged by the same article. One Harvard student with no religion wrote that the seminarians in the article moved him to read the Bible and visit a Christian church for the first time in his life. Isn't this what evangelization is all about? (REV.) KEVIN C. RHOADES

Emmitsburg, Md.

Salad bar seminarian?

In his recent letter [Correspondence, June 4], aspiring seminarian Christopher Roberts excoriated you for being insufficiently Catholic; as the ultimate insult, he compared you to Luther. This comment is out of sync with John Paul II's profound respect for non-Catholic Christians, as expressed most fervently in the encyclical *Ut unum sint*. Before he enters a seminary, Mr. Roberts should reflect on whether he's willing to follow the pope's lead in all matters, not just those that seem congenial to him. WILLIAM M. PETERSEN

Summit, N.J.

Matrix of 'The Matrix'

Richard Alleva's review of *The Matrix* [May 21] missed the the crux of the problem with the film, and others like it of the sci-fi cyberpunk genre: the dark view of the human person.

The Matrix continually questions the human person's capability to know: to know truth, to trust sense information, to be able to think and integrate thought and emotions, and to take responsibility for actions. To question is human; to find a response in pessimism—indeed nihilism—is a much graver problem that calls for a concerted, active response by those wishing to enter into dialogue with the film community and viewers alike.

Certainly Alleva mentions that humans are capable of free thought in relation to the domination of machines. But rather than passing by this important point to focus on the Red Brigade's view of reality and capitalism, why not take a good look at *The Matrix* as a popular-culture creation reflecting on ourselves? And further, to ask if in the future we will be able to know reality: Will there even be a reality we can know for certain? Will experience be so constructed by someone else that humans no longer have the power to think, decide, and act for themselves for the good of society?

This film is hardly nonsense, especially to the millions consuming it. In fact, to anyone wanting to look beyond what is obviously distasteful in popular film culture today, this film is a brilliant postmodern mirror. Afterwards I asked myself: Do these filmmakers think people can know reality? Do they believe in human freedom and responsibility? For deep down, this film questions the integrity of the human person.

That this type of alienating ideology exists and can be so creatively expressed and packaged is what needs to concern the faith community and those who review the films our young people are seeing. To my way of thinking, it is no longer enough to criticize a film for its violence or profanity or to label it "nonsense." When shall we begin to articulate and use the concept of the human person as the lens by which we review our cultural artifacts? Furthermore, when shall we begin to converse in our families, schools, faith communities, and with the media industries about the place of the human person in the "entertainment information" communications process? Respectful dialogue leads to reflection and reflection can lead to action. What are we waiting for? ROSE PACATTE, FSP

Boston, Mass.

The writer is the director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies.

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More 'Matrix'

I was surprised by Richard Alleva's review of *The Matrix* [May 21]. It struck me as a simplistic view of a complex film by a reviewer who normally writes with a much greater awareness of the subtleties of film.

Alleva knows that many films have several levels of meaning, but in this case he reviews only the most superficial one, the film's violence. His skipping over the other levels must mean that they were not worth discussing. But the film's other aspects deserve serious consideration.

An important aspect of the film, left out in the review, is the parallel between the film's cybernetic reality (the "matrix") and the mass-media-created "hyperreality" of the world we live in, to use a term of the social theorist Jean Baudrillard (whose book *Simulacra and Simulation* appears as a prop in the film). That is, according to Baudrillard, the mass media and popular culture govern our everyday world, creating a fictional reality that becomes more real to us than reality itself. The things that are relevant to us today are a result of this popular but fabricated culture. It seems quite apparent to me that the filmmakers intended viewers to draw this parallel between the film and contemporary society.

Another completely ignored aspect of this film are its religious overtones. These are not superficial and have to do with a messianic figure who would awaken the world to what's truly real. (Neo, the main character, vows at the end of the film to "wake people up and show them that anything is possible.") The film suggests that this is an awakening most people avoid because the true reality is too difficult for them to bear.

Finally, Alleva's connecting the protagonists of the film with Red Brigade-style terrorism is faulty. Left-wing terrorists never claimed that capitalism or its effects were unreal, but turned to extreme violence because they believed that their ends justified their means. By the same token, the protagonists of the film are quite aware that their actions in this cyber world have real-world consequences, as a death in the matrix meant a death of one's real body. Only in this sense can the utilitarian morality of the main characters be questioned, but no more so than those of the protagonists of any other action film in which innocent bystanders are killed in the pursuit of a larger goal.

Certainly the film should be faulted for its level of extreme violence, which contributes to a culture where violence has become ordinary and acceptable, but this does not justify dismissing the film in its entirety. The review ends up doing exactly what Alleva condemns earlier in his article, where he warns that in the effort to blame popular films for the recent spate of school shootings, films "of substance will be rounded up and shoved into the same van with movies that are sheer dreck."

GREG WILPERT
New York, N.Y.

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The author replies:

Sister Pacatte writes, "*The Matrix* continually questions the human person's [*sic*] capability...to know truth...," etc., etc. Continually? In its very first quarter-hour, that very vivid human person Laurence Fishburne declares his certainty that reality can be restored once the tyranny of the robots is overthrown. Presumably, in this new reality people will be able to "trust sense information...think and integrate thought and emotions...take responsibility for actions": precisely the things Pacatte says the movie *continually* questions. It is this certainty of the reality to come that licenses the chicly staged slaughters that are the real centerpieces of this film, rather than any Pirandelloesque questionings of the nature of reality.

On the other hand, Pacatte is absolutely right that *The Matrix* is "a populist culture creation reflecting on ourselves." Alas. And is art or even entertainment nothing more than a helpless reflection of malaise in our culture? Pacatte seems to think so, and I find this sad.

The first and last task of any film reviewer is to evaluate individual movies, not "to enter into dialogue with the film community." In view of her position at the Pauline Center, I hope Pacatte comes to realize this.

Mr. Wilpert may be right that *The Matrix* is chock-a-block with Baudrillardian ideas, but may I relate a story he probably already knows? Degas tells Mallarme he wants to write poems and has loads of great ideas for them. Mallarme replies that poems aren't made of ideas but words.

A medium comprising many arts, film is made of words, images, acting, dialogue, etc., and certainly of ideas too; but the ideas can only be manifested by the words, images., etc. Wilpert doesn't specify anywhere in his letter the scenes in which imagery or dialogue explores in depth the parallel between cybernetic reality and "hyperreality," or the fate of being a messianic figure. I'm not surprised. The showpieces of *The Matrix* and the very reasons for its existence are the kung fu, virtual-reality duels, and these fights are monotonous and stupid. How many times do we have to watch Reeves bouncing off walls or see

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rows of cops mowed down by gunfire?

Of course left-wing terrorists "turned to extreme violence because they believed that their ends justified their means." But what were their ends? One of the central tenets of the lunatic Left was that democratic capitalism had given the world "one-dimensional man." But don't make me start quoting Marcuse!

In my modest effort to keep violent films of substance from being lumped in with dreck, I partially praised in the same review *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Go*, and explained why. Then I panned *The Matrix* and explained why. This is called aesthetic discrimination, which is exactly what Wilpert found lacking in my piece, because he disagreed with my opinion and, presumably, the reasoning behind the opinion. But disagreement and lack of discrimination are not the same thing. RICHARD ALLEVA

For authentic ministry

Ken Lovasik's "Not for Hire" [June 4] should be required reading for every priest who has resigned from the priesthood. His point that ministry, Eucharist, and church are inextricably linked and that union with the local bishop is required for authentic ministry is one of the earliest assertions of Christian belief. For those of us who have chosen to sever that episcopal link, there is no theological justification for a free-lance ministry—saying Mass, witnessing marriages, or baptizing babies. Resignation *is* resignation.

The lucidity of Lovasik's article contrasts strongly with the lack of clear thinking about the resignation of priests. Those priests who take leave of their ministerial duties are typically confronted with intransigency and stone-walling. A humane and equitable policy would balance the rights of the church and those of the individual priest, and for his need of help in adjusting to a profoundly different life.

A further point: The issue of celibacy should not be a part of this discussion; it is an issue separate from that of resignation. JOHN K. HAWES

Southampton, N.Y.

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THE WAGES OF CHANGE

Mary Margaret Carberry

With as wicked a grin as such a kindly person could produce, a choir-member friend told me: "Just wait, Mary Margaret, until you hear the Indian war chant we are going to begin using for the Alleluia before the Gospel." She was giving me the warning because I do not always leap with enthusiasm over the liturgical innovations that continue to be thrust upon us just when we hope that things have settled down. The thrusters don't seem to recognize the inspiration and comfort many of us still derive from the long-loved traditional elements of our Catholic ceremonial heritage. So there's the rub.

"Well, will you have tom-toms?" I responded with a nonchalant jocularity, refusing to be baited into more of a reaction than a simple raised eyebrow.

She didn't believe so. And when I heard it, the chant indeed seemed fairly ordinary musically and quite acceptable religiously, although it did run on about three alleluias too long. So much for that dollop of multiculturalism.

The problem is, though, that I often wonder if we are not overdoing the culture-assimilating, ceremony-changing bit, and not only in music. Does anyone ever stop to think that people may well be attracted to the church because of what it already is, and what its centuries-old culture is? Did converts originally, perhaps, feel the pull of the church's mystique as exemplified in the tone of its sacred music and the dignity of its symbolism? Were they drawn by the respectful quiet of a low Mass without music, or the splendid beauty of a Solemn High Mass?

Did they want to be part of the deeply felt personal embrace of the church's prayerful practices, from the rosary to the stations to benediction? Did they find a more warm and welcoming home in the church as it was than in their former affiliations? If not, why were they changing?

So I think there is another really basic question here: Should the church now keep changing for the converts, or should the converts change for the church? For the faith?

Frequently I hear long-time Catholics comment, "I certainly wish that on Sundays we would sing more of the hymns we grew up with." Or, more seriously, "Do you suppose this new idea that seems so Protestant actually came from one of the recent converts on the Liturgy Committee?" Possibly, of course, the quirky new ceremonial addition really came from a "cradle Catholic" who is just thrilled to have an opportunity to be creative on the newly enlarged and open stage of the altar. Sometimes it is very difficult, very hard on the heart, to be openly critical of things so well meant but nonetheless so sore-thumbish in the eyes of many prayerful beholders.

So perhaps these days we need to be a little more pro "Catholic culture" and less enthusiastically change-for-change's-sake-oriented. We seem to be forgetting that the term catholic means universal, all-encompassing. I always thought that the church—with Christ's arms opened to embrace everyone, with its mission to "teach all nations"—had the lock on universality, on multiculturism if you want to see it that way. But at the same time, we are—as faith and the Spirit have made us—both a simple and complex centuries-old blend of belief and tradition. We are the Christ-inspired "Catholic culture" ourselves, aren't we?

That, at least, ought to be mentioned, recognized, and respected in the sometimes confusing, high-speed cultural sweeps of the nineties. We could use more of the warm radiance of benediction, not the inharmonious, sharp slap sound of high-fives being offered by a mod-minded celebrant as signs of peace.

In his retirement sermon, my former pastor made what I thought was a wonderfully wise observation. He had come to the conclusion, he said, that the changes growing out of Vatican II were for the most part good and beneficial. But there was a downside, he added. Too many things were changed too quickly, bringing distress and confusion to people who were afraid the comfort and stability of longstanding traditions were being stolen from them.

This was not just a pain of older Catholics either, as some too readily suggest. Back in those shifting sixties, there was nothing my little boy wanted more than to have a missal like mine with the Latin and English side by side. I gave him one for his First Communion, and he was proud and happy to have it to bring to church with him. Within a couple of years, however, Latin was out. Out and gone. He was hurt by it. Gradual change, a more lovingly-guided evolution, would have been better for him and, I believe, for all of us.

The best way to maintain the family home with its happy, comforting ambiance of love, memory, and dreams still to fulfill is not usually to throw out all the furnishings, tear it down, and begin building all over. God forbid that we should unwittingly ever be led to that. Once in a while we need to remind ourselves that what we are at this moment is pretty fine. Or is satisfaction with our own Catholic culture becoming some sort of prideful new sin? □

Mary Margaret Carberry *is a free-lance essayist from the Chicago area who publishes light verse as Mary Margaret Milbrath.*

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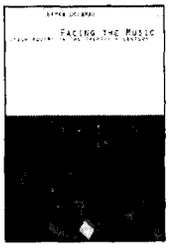

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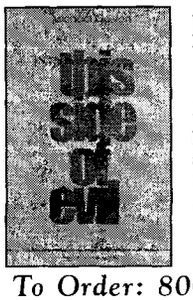

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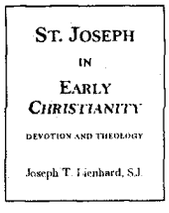

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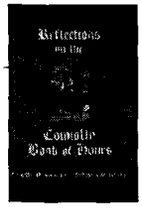

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